



Birkdale  
School

# S3 Handbook

*for September 2025*

**STRONGER  
TOGETHER**

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# Welcome to S3

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Dear Parents

We have issued this handbook to help parents and children in the transition to the Middle School at Birkdale. Partnership between us is extremely important, and the information in these pages is designed to help you to be better equipped to play your part in that partnership. The handbook sets out to explain choices which need to be made, to describe the syllabus content of the different subjects, to give notes for guidance to you as parents, and to outline the wider curriculum, including Outdoor Education, Careers and Games. Next year, we shall issue an S4/S5 handbook which goes into more detail about GCSE options and Careers, and which looks ahead to the Sixth Form.

The structures in the curriculum are designed to keep a careful balance of developing academic depth and keeping open subject options for GCSE and A Level study. Our curriculum at this stage is in line with the National Curriculum but not rigidly constrained by it.

In order for your child to fully benefit from Birkdale, they should make the most of the opportunities on offer and 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.

I hope that you find this handbook helpful. The Head of Middle School is Ms Jessica Warren, and any pastoral matters should be directed in the first instance to your child's Form Tutor or Ms Warren. On curriculum issues Mr Ryan Becks (Deputy Head (Academic)) will be happy to discuss your concerns, and I am always glad to meet parents to discuss more general matters.



**Peter Harris**  
Head





# Middle School Wider Curriculum

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## Purpose

As Head of Middle School, it is my responsibility to ensure that we provide appropriate, targeted and effective pastoral, well-being and academic support to all of the pupils within the Middle School. We aim to provide opportunities that help empower our pupils to become the best versions of themselves that they can be.

We have a dedicated team of Form Tutors as well as Heads of Year who play a crucial role in facilitating the development of the young people in our care, during Form Time and throughout the school day.

## Middle School Curriculum

S3 is the first year of the three-year Middle School programme. It is inevitable that GCSE examinations will become the focus of attention in this part of the school, and that academic achievement will be given a high priority. S3 is mainly made up of core subjects, with few choices to be made, but during its course pupils will need to be thinking of their GCSE choices.

The National Curriculum is incorporated in many of the subject areas of Birkdale but we maintain independence when it comes to our curriculum. As you will see later, we can offer two Modern Foreign Languages plus Latin to those who wish to specialise in this area or a Modern Foreign Language, Art, Computing, Drama, DT and Music to pupils who wish to embrace creative subjects.

During the Middle School years, pupils will be developing as individuals and will not only be learning academic skills, but will also be maturing as people. Birkdale provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities and classroom teaching aimed at developing the "whole person". Many of these are detailed elsewhere, but it is important to mention that pupils are expected to take advantage of these opportunities. There are S3 and S4 camps, compulsory for all, the opportunity to be involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and the usual range of sport, music and drama; all of them will encourage personal responsibility, teamwork and leadership skills. Several pupils in S4 and S5 will be invited to be monitors, thereby learning to exercise that responsibility. We also select two monitors to represent the Middle School in the roles of Head and Deputy Head. All will receive guidance on Careers and future choices at GCSE and A level, prompting them to have greater awareness of their strengths and areas for development and promoting decision-making skills. All will receive teaching about personal relationships and sexuality. Finally, there is the enormous variety that Birkdale offers through the clubs and societies programme. Do encourage your child to take a full part in these opportunities.

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## Pastoral Care

Underpinning our pastoral care is our commitment to understanding our core school values:

<b>Respect</b>	Appreciate and value our differences
<b>Humility</b>	Celebrate the successes of others as well as our own
<b>Integrity</b>	Doing the right thing, regardless of the circumstances
<b>Courage</b>	Doing what we know to be right, even when it is difficult
<b>Compassion</b>	Caring for others, appreciating their feelings and perspectives

One way in which we achieve this is through our Character Reflection programme which takes place during Form Time. Pupils are guided and supported through a process of self-reflection by their Form Tutor and Head of Year, learning to develop the skills necessary for success in later life.

## Academic Support

Alongside our pastoral care, we provide guidance and support in order that all of our pupils have the best chance of achieving their full academic potential. Central to this is our Grade Review programme.

At key points in the academic year, and with the support and guidance of Form Tutors and Heads of Year, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their successes, take responsibility for their studies, aspire to their own personal level of excellence and think carefully about how they might achieve even greater success in the future.

The opportunities on offer throughout the Middle School allow each and every pupil to try new experiences, explore different perspectives and challenge themselves in an encouraging and supportive environment.

It is my absolute pleasure and privilege to care for and support our Middle School pupils.

**Ms Jessica Warren**

Assistant Head

Head of Middle School



# The Academic Curriculum

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The Head of Middle School with responsibility for S3, S4 and S5 is Ms Jessica Warren. Ms Warren looks after the personal and social development of the pupils within her care with the help of Mrs Magenty, Mr Bridle and Mr Herold (Assistant Heads of Middle School) and the Form Tutors.

Pupils stay together as forms throughout the Middle School and, as far as possible, each child keeps the same Form Tutor for the whole of the three-year period. The three form groups are not streamed, although pupils are in sets for Mathematics and Science.

Most of the S3 Curriculum is common to all pupils. This core consists of:

- Mathematics 5 periods per week
- English 4 periods per week
- Biology/Chemistry/Physics 6 periods per week
- Geography/History/RE 9 periods per week
- PE/Games 4 periods per week

The remaining 12 periods occur as three option blocks. One subject is chosen from the Language block, and further subjects chosen from blocks 1 and 2 (totalling 8 periods). Pupils wishing to study two Modern Foreign Languages may choose French and either German or Spanish.

Language Block (4 periods)	Blocks 1 and 2 (total 8 periods)*
French German Spanish	French (4 periods) Latin (2 periods) Art (2 periods) Computing (2 periods) DT (2 periods) Drama (2 periods) Music (2 periods)

*\*Pupils who find their study of English difficult will be allocated 2 extra periods of English (a total of six periods per week). These pupils will, therefore, only need to select subjects for six periods from Blocks 1 and 2 (rather than 8).*

## Examples of possible combinations

- A keen linguist might study German, French and Latin.
- A pupil wishing to fully embrace the Creative subjects might study French, Art, Computing, DT and Music.

Details of the content and aims of the courses offered to S3 pupils are given in the next few pages. They will be asked for their choices in the first half of the Summer term.

# Curriculum Structure S4 - S5

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During S3 of the Senior School pupils must decide which combination of subjects they will study in S4 and S5. These are very important decisions which can affect career choice at a later stage. There is much advice available through published material, subject teachers, Form Tutors, and from senior members of staff. The following suggestions may be useful:

1. Most pupils will want to study subjects that they enjoy and are good at.
2. Pupils should not generally allow themselves to be influenced by how much they like a particular teacher or the decisions of their friends.
3. Pupils should try to maintain their freedom to choose careers later by keeping as many options open as possible.
4. Pupils should strike a sensible balance between the Humanities, Languages and Creative subjects.

The aim of the S3 Careers course is to give pupils the knowledge and confidence to enable them to make sound decisions.

There will be more details about GCSE subjects, the blocking system and advice about the combinations of subjects which are encouraged and discouraged in the S4 and S5 Parents Handbook.

The current programme consists of:

## **COMPULSORY (CORE) SUBJECTS**

All pupils study the following subjects to GCSE:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics
- Science (either 2 or 3 GCSEs)
- One Humanities subject (Classical Civilisation, Geography, History or Religious Education)
- A Modern Foreign Language (French, German or Spanish)

In addition, the following non-examined subjects are taken:

- PSHE, including: Careers, Economic Awareness, Political Systems, Health Education, Substance Abuse and Religious Education
- Physical Education
- Games

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## **OPTIONAL SUBJECTS**

Pupils may select any two of the following subjects to study to GCSE:

- Art
- Classical Civilisation
- Computing
- Design & Technology (Electronic Products) or Design & Technology (Resistant Materials)
- Drama
- Geography
- History
- Latin
- Music
- Physical Education
- Religious Studies
- Second Foreign Language (French, German or Spanish)
- Additional Support

The option subjects are arranged into blocks to accommodate as many wishes of the particular year-group as possible. Nine or ten subjects are thus studied by pupils to GCSE.

The provision of one or two less popular subjects is dependent upon there being sufficient demand.



# Academic Work

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School work, homework and coursework are all essential elements of the education programme at Birkdale. We monitor progress by assessing homework and classwork and report to parents and pupils on grade cards, at Parents Evenings and in end of term reports. There are examinations 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. As pupils move into S4 and S5 the grades begin to translate to the GCSE performance that might be expected given continued progress.

A summary of the grade criteria for S3 is given below.

ATTAINMENT		EFFORT		
<i>Grade</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Grade</i>		<i>Comment</i>
A	Excellent	O	Outstanding	Gives their best all the time
B	Very good	V	Very Good	Does all they should and more
C	Good	G	Good	Concentrates and work well most of the time
D	Weak	S	Satisfactory	Does not try as hard as they could
		U	Unsatisfactory	There is serious concern with effort

Pupils 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, is used to focus attention on a pupil overcoming his problems.

## HOMEWORK

Homework is set as indicated in the homework timetable 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 will be set on Google Classroom.

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

1. Repetition of unsatisfactory work.
2. Detention after school on a Tuesday evening.

Staff can also choose to give an academic detention at lunchtime on Thursday.

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

1. Checking the Google Classroom. In S1 and S2 pupils will have regular check-ins with their form tutor. This measure is relaxed in later years but parents are encouraged to maintain an interest in the work set; those who find organisation difficult may be asked to adopt a procedure whereby parents check set work and assignments on Google Classroom with their child.
2. Supporting the disciplinary procedures applied to pupils who fall below the standards expected.

Pupils will set targets after reporting points. These will be recorded in the homework planner, and parents will be expected to sign to say they have seen them.

## **REPORTS & 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:

	<b>Christmas</b>	<b>Easter</b>	<b>Summer</b>
<b>S1</b>	Parents Evening	Report	Grades
<b>S2</b>	Parents Evening	Grades	Report
<b>S3</b>	Grades	Parents Evening	Report
<b>S4</b>	Parents Evening	Report	Parents Evening
<b>S5</b>	Report	Parents Evening	-
<b>L6</b>	Parents Evening	Report	Parents Evening
<b>U6</b>	Report	Parents Evening	-

Parents worried about the progress of their child may contact their Form Tutor, their Head of Year, or the Head of Middle School at any stage. This especially applies after a report from the School.

# Outdoor Education

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The Outdoor Education programme in Middle School continues to be structured around exploration and challenge. The programme progresses the development of a 'Well Rounded Student', building and developing personal characteristics such as commitment, communication, trust and resilience. Strong tangible links are created between academic achievement and the world outside the classroom, whilst also offering new opportunities for students wishing to challenge themselves further.

The pupils start their Middle School education with the traditional S3 Camp. This residential camping trip takes place in the first half term; providing the opportunity for the pupils to develop new friendships, expand their team skills and experience the wonderful Peak District through new eyes. The first day is a hike out in a team, led by a member of the Birkdale Outdoor Education teaching staff, to a campsite not far away. The second day is an outdoor education feast, where Birkdale's superb teaching staff bring their subject knowledge to the great outdoors and engage the pupils in a new environment.

Pupils are also able to begin the Duke of Edinburgh Award in S3. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award helps young people build life-long belief in themselves, supporting them to take on their own challenges and they can begin this journey by signing up at the end of S2. They will gain training during the S3 Camp and additional sessions over the winter months, before participating in a final qualifying expedition in the Summer term.

Additional opportunities arise throughout the year and may be signed up to as and when they arise and whether or not pupils wish to take on the challenges. Moving in to S4, they will be offered further adventures, the whole year group attending the S4 Camp, which is held at Thornbridge Outdoors in the Peak District National Park. This is a longer residential trip advancing the same ideas seen in the S3 Camp and building in additional challenges and skills, for example catering! In addition, pupils are eligible to begin their journey in to the DofE Silver Award, if they wish. There is much to look forward to.

Activity	Compulsory	Optional	Estimated Cost
S3 Camp			£30
Bronze DofE			£50
S4 Camp			£250
Silver DofE			£350



# Careers

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Careers guidance is given to all pupils in S3. Our aim is to help them to make well-balanced choices of options which keep as many career doors open as possible. The pupils are guided in their decision-making in the following ways:

They consider and discuss with PSHEE staff and their Form Tutor the options system and what they need to find out about a proposed subject choice. Emphasis is placed on the essentials of good decision-making. The pupils are encouraged to assess their own strengths and areas for development so that they have an idea of the broad areas of work which they are likely to find satisfying.

Pupils in S3 and above are encouraged to attend our biennial Careers Fair at which they and their parents can consult approximately 100 advisers representing a wide range of professions, employers, Gap Year organisations and Higher Education institutions.



# The S3 Curriculum





## ART & DESIGN

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### Aims

In the third year, pupils can choose to take two periods of Art per week as an option subject. The year leads naturally to GCSE but is also of value to all pupils in that practical skills can increase and a deeper appreciation and understanding of Art can be experienced.

### Content and Skills

This year will be a period of exploration and experimentation. The projects undertaken will have a more personal edge preparing the pupils for the demands of the GCSE course. Underpinning the course there is still a good deal of exposure to established Art and attention paid to objective study.

### S3 Projects

The Art projects are designed to familiarise the pupils with a more creative and personal response. Below are a selection of projects taught:

**New Art from Old** – studying work from the National Gallery the pupils look at the work of the old masters and then learn how to transcribe the work using Photoshop. They then produce a painting and a print from the image they create.

- **Studies from Renaissance** – developing tonal drawing in pencil.
- **Architectural Interiors** – the pupils refine their skills in how to draw an interior (with furniture).
- **Superheroes Project** – pupils create an image using Photoshop.
- **In the third term, the pupils will sit a drawing exam lasting for five weeks.**

### Assessment

All tasks including homework are assessed using the school's assessment policy. A homework booklet is given to everyone during the end of year exam. The mark given is made up of the exam drawing together with all the homework tasks. This teaches the pupils that preparation work is as important as the final drawing.

### Skills

Drawing, painting, digital art and printmaking skills will be built upon and enhanced in preparation for the GCSE course.



## BIOLOGY

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### Aims

In S3 Biology, we make a start to the AQA GCSE 8461 course. As well as learning some of the fundamental theoretical work, we also develop practical skills and mathematical skills through completion of several of the required practical tasks.

### Content and Skills

The topics covered in S3 Biology are as follows:

- Cell structure, including a microscopy required practical and calculations of size/conversion of units
- Cell transport, including an osmosis required practical
- The digestive system and digestive enzymes, including required practical work on food tests and the action of amylase on starch
- Photosynthesis including a required practical on the effect of light intensity on the rate of photosynthesis

The topics covered are common for both GCSE Biology and GCSE Trilogy Science so that decisions on courses taken at GCSE can be made at a later date.

### Assessment

Pupils sit an in-class assessment at the end of each topic, as well as an end-of-year assessment in examination week.

### Skills

Five out of the ten required practical tasks are completed this year, as well as the analytical and mathematical skills to process data generated from these. Pupils will also learn how to work safely in the laboratory and to complete group work effectively.

### Trips/extra-curricular activities

Pupils are welcome to attend weekly Biology clinics for support with this work.

## CHEMISTRY

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### Aims

In S3 the pupils embark on a course which will continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of some important topics in Chemistry, building on their studies from the Lower School Science course. Part of this course includes topics from the GCSE specification and will also develop important practical skills.

### Content and Skills

The following topics are covered in S3:

- Introduction to mixtures, compounds and changes of physical states
- Methods of separation
- Chemical formulae and equations
- Metals and their relative reactivity
- Rates of reaction
- Introduction to atomic structure and bonding

### Assessment

Assessment is carried out through homework exercises and a series of end of topic tests. There is a more formal end of year exam taken in the Summer term.

### Skills

Pupils who follow the GCSE Chemistry course will develop many skills, including scientific literacy, numeracy, problem solving, interpreting data, communication, practical skills and ICT.

### Trips/extra-curricular activities

Pupils can attend the weekly Chemistry clinic. Students may be selected to represent the school in the RSC 'Top of the Bench' Chemistry Competition.



## COMPUTER SCIENCE

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### Aims

The S3 course in Computer Science aims to give the pupils a taste of several key areas of computing and software development. There are elements of User Experience design (UX) and some digital literacy skills (Vector Graphics) in addition to exposure to programming using both blocky and text-based languages. The course provides a good transition towards work at GCSE level in a less formal program. The emphasis is on creativity and skill-building rather than a heavy reliance on theory and learning of computing fundamentals.

### Content and Skills

The course is broken down into a number of discrete units. These are arranged to encourage a progression of skills.

#### 1. Introduction to Python Programming

Pupils are introduced to text-based programming using the Python language. Students learn how to gather information from users and process this to create written output. Fundamental coding skills such as looping, decision-making and re-use through functions will be covered in this work. Many of the concepts are developed by creating simple text-based games.

#### 2. Vector Graphics creation with Illustrator

Pupils will create a portfolio of increasingly sophisticated vector graphics scenes using a professional graphics design package (Adobe Illustrator.) They will use techniques that relate to computer graphic manipulation such as use of primitives, Boolean operations and layering and sequencing.

#### 3. Mobile App development using App Lab

Pupils will learn about the Classic Model of Computing and how it can be applied to all manner of gadgets and systems. They will develop design skills aimed at producing attractive and effective User Interfaces for mobile phone apps. As the unit progresses they will build up their ability to code a phone app using the App Lab blocky language.

#### 4. Python programming for Game Development

Pupils will build on the Python programming introduced in the first term to produce arcade-style games. They will rapidly build up their ability to work with the PyGame library using 2D graphics to produce user-controlled animation. They will build a template 'game loop' and use this to recreate classic arcade games or develop their own designs. Students will learn about Game Design Patterns and blend several of these into their own creation. They can also re-visit aspects of Vector Graphics to produce the icons in their games programmatically rather than sourcing pre-made images.

#### 5. Cyber Security skills through Cyber Explorers

Students will explore a range of digital skills relevant to staying safe online through exploration of a virtual online world. They will learn about threats to their privacy, online identity and understanding of world events due to misinformation. They will also develop strategies and skills to deal with these threats.

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## Assessment

Each unit of work is assessed using a mixture of portfolio work and for some units an end of topic mini-project. The quality of homework submitted throughout the course is also taken into consideration (homework tasks often feed in to the evidence submitted as part of a project).

Mini-projects and portfolios assessed:

1. Text-based games in Python
2. Cracking of encrypted messages using Python
3. Vector graphics portfolio of scenes
4. **Vector graphics creative challenge (eg Christmas card)**
5. Create a working game loop with user-controlled player and multiple NPCs
6. **Develop Retro arcade game in Python (eg shooter or platform game or collecting game)**
7. Data collection Mobile App (eg Survey app with result graphing)
8. **Randomised Mobile App ( eg Magic 8 Ball or Harry Potter sorting hat)**
9. **Collect badges and certificates through the Cyber Explorers program**

Pupils will also sit a Summer exam paper that will have equal weighting with the main projects (underlined above) in arriving at an overall grade for the year.

## Skills

Students who participate fully in this course can expect to develop the following skills

- Appreciation of applying the Classic Model of Computing
- Experience of designing effective user interfaces for mobile phone apps
- Work with a variety of inputs and sensors using a blocky language
- Creating and using robust test plans to check apps work correctly
- Peer and self-review of designs and created software products
- Competent use of graphics primitives and complex shapes including use of the Bezier Pen and 3D techniques such as rotate/extrude/revolve
- Fundamentals of programming in a text-based language
- Use of a game loop to control and present interactive images on screen
- Understanding of event-driven programming and use of event-handler functions
- Have an understanding of cyber security risks and how to reduce their impact

## Trips/extra-curricular activities

Pupils are also encouraged to participate in other programming-related events such as the Perse Braben Cup, the UK Bebras Coding Challenge, the Alan Turing Cryptography Competition and the Southampton University Cipher Challenge.

## DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

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### Aims

The department broadly adopts the KS3 National Curriculum subject content and provides some National Curriculum assessment opportunities. This approach is adopted to allow pupils to have a broad knowledge of different material, and specialist areas within Design and Technology.

The curriculum is mostly centred on a one project per term approach. A certain level of flexibility is tolerated wherever possible to allow for a project to be completed should it overrun.

In S3 pupils will reinforce skills gained at S1 and S2 and prepare pupils for GCSE in Design and Technology. The year is split into two with focused projects aimed at preparing students for D&T (Resistant Materials route) or D&T (systems route).

The theory content taught should be appropriate to the project content and appropriate written work will be set in line with the school homework timetable, providing regular opportunity for assessment of each pupil.

### Content and Skills

The S3 projects are designed to visit separate D & T skills areas whilst maintaining wherever possible the design approach. Certain projects lend themselves more to a focus task approach, however design tasks are built into these projects at various stages to reinforce the design and make principles.

### S3 – Projects:

Reaction tester	This is aimed at showing pupils what might be involved if they were to take the Design and Technology systems option. Pupils are taught more in-depth electronics and systems. The project focuses on a Programmable Interface Controller or 'PIC'. These small components can be programmed with different inputs and outputs to form tunes and light different LEDs. The project is then housed in a 3D printed case and a laser cut top, to the student's own specification. Pupils will learn about simple programming and flow diagrams.
USB desk light	This project is designed as an introduction to the Design and Technology resistant materials route. Pupils look at the process of aluminium casting to design and make a base for the light. They then use workshop skills and equipment to make an multi adjustable frame for a USB-powered desk light, using a range of different materials.

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## Assessment

To allow for greater practical workshop time, each project has a homework booklet. Not all homework set is appropriate to the practical lesson experience. Marks are awarded in line with the marking and assessment policy.

*The marks you get for each piece of classwork/homework will be for Attainment (how good it is) and Effort (how hard you have tried). The Attainment grade will be from A-G and the Effort grade will be 'O' to 'U'.*

## Skills

The broad skills areas we aim to cover through KS3 projects are as follows:

- The design and make principle
- Health and safety awareness
- Graphics skills
- Metal-based skills
- Wood-based skills
- Electrics and electronics-based skills
- Circuit Wizard
- Solid Works 3D modelling CAD software
- Experience of CNC machinery (Laser cutter and 3D printer)
- Investment aluminium casting



## DRAMA

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### Aims

S3 can be a period of exploration and experimentation since the pupils have shown some commitment in choosing the subject. S3 Drama will build on the skills already acquired in the Lower School and prepare the pupils for the Key Stage 4 GCSE curriculum.

### Content and Skills

The year leads naturally to GCSE Drama, but is also of value to all pupils. Both practical skills and confidence can increase, and a deeper appreciation and understanding of Drama can be experienced.

There is a free choice of stimulus material and play texts throughout the year, giving flexibility to choose the most appropriate texts and themes for students. Pupils will study theatrical genres such as Melodrama and Comedy, as well as studying the Willy Russell Play, Blood Brothers.

### Assessment

Pupils' practical performance and creation skills will be assessed each term. This will offer opportunity to review the progress of each individual in line with marking criteria from the GCSE Drama (9-1) course. In the Easter term and beyond, pupils will also be assessed on their writing and evaluation of Drama to offer further insight for the pupils into the requirements of the GCSE course.

### Skills

Confidence	Meeting Deadlines	Organisation	Empathy
Group Work	Leadership	Confidence	Planning
Research	Written Evaluation	Verbal Evaluation	Listening

### Trips/extra-curricular activities

Pupils are offered the opportunity to develop Live Theatre Evaluation skills in line with the requirements of the GCSE course. This will usually involve attending at least one professional production, analysing and evaluating its success.

All pupils are encouraged to audition for school productions, as well as diversifying their performance breadth by exploring group and individual performance opportunities inside and outside school.

## ENGLISH

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### Aims

We run our own assessment programme in S3, covering all the key skills areas and making our pupils more familiar with the demands of the courses in English and English Literature that they will all follow in S4 and S5.

Pupils will:

- Enjoy reading a wide variety of texts, both literary and non-fiction, including novels, plays, Shakespeare, poetry from 1600s to the present day
- Study 19<sup>th</sup> century history, culture, ideas, writers and texts in a 'building cultural capital' module
- Learn to write for a wide variety of purposes
- Complete a short module on how and why language changes over time
- Learn to write accurately and with increasing confidence and sophistication
- Engage successfully in group discussions, debates and give presentations

While there is a common framework of assessment, each class teacher structures what is done according to the nature of each specific group.

### STAFFING AND TIMETABLING

English in S3 is taught in four parallel mixed ability classes of eighteen or nineteen students. They will be taught for four periods per week.

In addition, we identify a number of pupils for whom extra time spent on core literacy skills will be more valuable than studying a greater range of subjects. These will typically be those with the lowest overall English scores in S2. This small group will have the advantage of extra coaching: two periods of English together each week, in addition to their main English lessons.

### Content and Skills

#### ATTAINMENT TARGET 1: SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Pupils 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. We also study an anthology of political and social protest writing. The department has a number of class sets of novels that can be read and studied by the whole group together. All pupils 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 pupil brings the books they have read and talks about them, sharing ideas and recommendations with others so that overall progress can be monitored. **We expect pupils to read a novel of their own choice for forty minutes a week at home.**

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### ATTAINMENT TARGET 3: WRITING

Pupils 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.

### Assessment

#### ASSESSMENT OF WRITTEN WORK

Early in September, pupils complete a writing assessment which is marked by the class teacher as a diagnostic tool. The skills we assess here are ones developed and practised in S2. In the Summer exam, a similar assessment takes place where writing to persuade, explain or argue is the focus. This enables staff to see how writing skills have improved over the year and helps us monitor progress from S2 to S4.

There will be coursework set on the set texts studied which will enable pupils to practise key skills for language and literature. This work will take place in lessons where teachers can give immediate support. The types of task set reflect the work pupils will do for iGCSE in order to prepare them for coursework in S4.

### Skills

Pupils 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;
- build cultural capital;
- write accurate English, and 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.

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### **Trips/extra-curricular activities**

#### **EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Drama, creative writing and debating are the department's main extra-curricular activities. We also encourage pupils to join school theatre trips in Sheffield and further afield when relevant. Opportunities exist for them to take part in national and local competitions for essay and letter writing, poetry and journalism.



## **GEOGRAPHY**

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### **Aims**

The S3 year is the one during which most pupils develop an ever-increasing awareness of, and interest in, their surroundings at both local and global levels. The enquiry learning style is continued so that they are encouraged to ask questions so that both knowledge and skills are acquired which will form a sound basis for the GCSE course.

### **Content and Skills**

Pupils will learn from the real world, about the real world. Geographical skills and concepts are developed through the study of a series of topics, many of which stimulate a large amount of debate and discussion. These include the topic of World Development, which looks at over-population and the quality of life in the developing world and how trade affects development. We look at the factors and impacts of conflicts and give the pupils the opportunity to develop their intellectual curiosity through independent research on some of these topics. Natural hazards and disaster are studied. We look at the causes, impacts, and how people and countries respond to these hazards with a focus on how they differ from contrasting areas of the world. In the Summer term we focus on the rising Superpowers of the world, including Russia, Brazil and some Middle East countries.

### **Assessment**

Pupils are assessed regularly at the end of each topic in the form of a class test with exam style questions. There will also be a formal Summer term exam in Geography.

### **Skills**

Geography in S3 will provide pupils with a range of skills which are transferable between subjects. The following skills are developed throughout the year:

- The ability to work in a team and individually
- The use of ICT, GIS
- Graphical and cartographic representation
- The development of various skills in communication & literacy
- Statistical analysis of large amounts of data
- The development of research skills
- Analytical skills and the ability to interpret maps & diagrams
- Discussion, role play, decision-making and problem solving
- Map reading skills are further developed and have a particular significance in this year, since most pupils are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme which has a strong outdoor/ environmental element. The Geography staff are closely involved in such activities.

### **Trips/extra-curricular activities**

In S3 pupils have the option to join one of our overseas residential field trips such as Iceland.

## HISTORY

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### Aims

The aim of this course is to teach about major events in the past between the years 1746 and 1991.

### Content and Skills

In this course the pupils will study the major events and issues in British History from 1746 to modern times including the Industrial Revolution, the British Empire and the Right to Vote. The pupils will then study the Second World War which is a topic that starts with the First World War and finishes with the Cold War.

### Assessment

There is an assessment on Public Health in January worth 20% of the overall mark for the year and an examination on The Second World War in the Summer term worth 80% of the overall mark for the year.

### Skills

This course develops a range of transferable skills such as the ability to analyse, evaluate and pass judgement alongside the acquiring of historical knowledge.

### Trips/extra-curricular activities

There is a Middle School Film Club as well as a trip to the National Holocaust Museum.

## LATIN

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### Aims

To uncover the mysteries of an ancient language and find out more about the classical world (while having fun).

### Content and Skills

In S3 pupils will continue to develop and expand their knowledge of Latin, as well as exploring what life was like in Roman Britain and other areas of the Roman Empire. We use the Suburani course, which students have become familiar with during S1 and S2. Highlights include learning about the Great Fire of Rome, underwater archaeology and Roman piracy.

Latin helps pupils to:

- Expand their English vocabulary by looking at Latin roots.
- Learn vocabulary in other European languages.
- Develop awareness of how languages work.
- Understand the influence of Roman civilisation on modern culture.

Ideal if pupils are interested in studying the ancient world at GCSE.

### Assessment

There are regular small vocab tests throughout the year and a final examination which includes both language and the background material studied.

### Trips/extra-curricular activities

We hope to organise a trip to Hadrian's Wall to see what life was like on the frontier of Roman Britain.

A Greek club runs as a lunchtime activity for pupils who would like to become acquainted with Ancient Greek and the history/culture of classical Greece (open to all pupils, not just those taking Latin!)

## MATHEMATICS

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### Aims

The aim of the S3 course is to build upon the foundations laid in S1 and S2. The work is set in relevant contexts wherever possible and some iGCSE topics are introduced during the year.

### Content and Skills

There is now more focus on algebra, including manipulation of expressions and solving equations – leading to simultaneous equations. The pupils also learn the gradient-intercept form for the equation of a straight line as well as some basic trigonometry.

### Assessment

The pupils' progress is continually assessed through regular setting and marking of homework. They will also have a progress test at the start of each half term.

### Skills

In order to prepare for iGCSE, problem-solving skills are developed. The pupils are made to think carefully about which particular piece of Maths knowledge they need to select and use in order to answer a question.



## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Pupils choose either one language (French, German, Spanish) or two (French plus German or Spanish).

### Aims

To enjoy languages as a means of communicating personal information and visiting the foreign country, in an increasingly globalised world.

### Content and Skills

The courses emphasise successful communication and independent learning, allowing for a smooth progression to a GCSE in French, German or Spanish.

A wide range of enjoyable and stimulating resources is used. We use authentic language materials to develop communication skills, broaden pupils' vocabulary and foster intercultural awareness.

There's an emphasis on speaking the foreign language more spontaneously, with many extra-curricular opportunities. Use of the foreign language is actively encouraged not only between pupil and teacher but also between pupils.

S3 pupils have conversation practice in small groups with our French, German and Spanish assistants.

- Languages are important for:
- Getting to know new people and cultures
- Social and business interaction
- Travel and living abroad
- Communication skills in general

### Assessment

There are regular class tests for vocabulary. Formal assessments focus on the key language of the textbook units, with listening, reading, speaking and writing sections.

### Trips and extra-curricular activities

The department organises a range of visits and trips abroad, with participation strongly recommended.

## MUSIC

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### Aims

The Third Year Music course is designed with two aims in mind. Firstly, to enable any pupil interested in Music to further develop their skills and enjoyment of the subject; and secondly to begin to lay a foundation for those who wish to continue and take Music at GCSE. All are welcome!

### Content and Skills

Topics covered in the Third Year include:

- Theme and Variations
- Popular Music (ranging from early jazz to the present day)
- Music in the Media (looking at the types of Music you see in everyday life)
- Modal Music
- Dance Music

### Assessment

Practical work involves writing and recording your own pop song, composing music for adverts and cartoons, descriptive music and experimental composing.

### Skills

As in S2, there is an emphasis on practical and creative work whilst continuing to look at a broad range of musical styles. New compositional techniques will be taught which will help prepare pupils for the higher demand of the GCSE course.

### Extra-curricular activities

All S3 pupils are encouraged to get involved in the Music Department's extensive range of extra-curricular activities – request further details from your music teacher!

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION & GAMES

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### Aims

Physical Education and Games in the Third Year are designed to build upon the foundation work of the Lower School syllabus. The objectives of improved motor skills, organic development, self-realisation, social competence, moral development, and aesthetic appreciation are continually fostered by the PE and Games programme.

### Content and Skills

During the Third Year, pupils will continue to experience a variety of team games including Rugby, Football, Cricket, Basketball, Hockey and Volleyball. Pupils will also have the opportunity to participate in the individual sports of Badminton, Swimming, Cross-country, Table Tennis, Tennis and Athletics. They will also study the principles of training and the value of exercise through a health-related exercise course.

### Assessment

Pupils in the Third Year will be assessed in both their Practical and Cognitive Performance. This will take place in the core curriculum sports during Physical Education lessons at the end of each block of sport, usually lasting 5-6 weeks.

### Extra-curricular activities

The extra-curricular programme is viewed as an important extension of the department's curricular programme. A comprehensive and varied range of lunchtime and after school activities, as well as team practices, are provided which are intended to develop those skills, attitudes and behavioural patterns necessary for both individual development and team success.

School teams are selected and compete against both independent and state schools in regular fixtures on both Saturday mornings and midweek in Rugby, Rugby 7s, Football, Cricket, Cross-country, Tennis, Hockey and Basketball. There are also teams selected for local and national competitions in Badminton, Table Tennis, Golf and Athletics.

Inter-House competitions are held for all of the major school sports and pupils are expected to play a full and active part in representing their Houses. Pupils will also get the chance to represent their House in the annual Swimming Gala and Sports Day.

## PHYSICS

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### Aims

In S3 the pupils make a start on their studies of the GCSE Physics specification. A key aim of the S3 year is also to develop important practical skills, and several required practical activities will be carried out.

### Content and Skills

The following topics are partially covered in S3:

- Energy
- The Particle Model
- Waves
- Motion

Please note that the content covered is common to both the Physics and Trilogy specifications, so the choice of GCSE course taken can be chosen later.

### Assessment

The pupils take regular progress tests throughout the course (approximately every 5-6 lessons). An end of year exam is taken in the Summer term.

### Skills

Pupils who follow the GCSE Physics course will develop many skills, including scientific literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, interpreting data, communication, practical skills and ICT.

### Trips and extra-curricular activities

Pupils can attend the weekly GCSE Physics clinic.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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### Aims

RE in S3 explores certain ultimate questions about life and existence, the kind of questions raised by religious responses to the world: is there a God, is there life after death, what is a human being and how should humans be treated? Our aim is that pupils learn to reflect on these questions critically and coherently and start to formulate their own responses. There will be a strong emphasis on guiding pupils towards moral integrity, valuing other human beings, learning to be tolerant and respectful.

### Content and Skills

#### *Term 1 (/2)*

##### PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

##### PART 1: INTRODUCTION – ‘AUTHENTIC’ AND ‘INAUTHENTIC’ BELIEF

Pupils are first encouraged to be ‘authentic thinkers’, making their own decisions, and then ‘authentic believers’, responsible for their own belief commitments.

##### PART 2: ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Pupils learn and debate some of the classic arguments for and against God’s existence.

#### *Term 2 (/3)*

##### EXPLORING MORAL PHILOSOPHY 1: HUMAN RIGHTS, WAR AND PEACE

Pupils learn to appreciate the human values at the core of our civilization. We look at the way certain moral choices can ‘dehumanise’ human beings and encourage pupils to come to reasoned conclusions about war and the use of violence.

#### *Term 3*

##### EXPLORING MORAL PHILOSOPHY 2: RELATIONSHIPS

Pupils use the framework of existential ‘authenticity’ to analyse moral choices in human relationships. They look at modern consumer society and assess its worth in terms of its effect on human relationships.

##### CONCEPTS IN EASTERN RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

Pupils empathise with an alternative mind set to their inherited Western perspective on reality, thus helping them to understand a Western perspective more clearly.

### Assessment

Pupils are assessed on their ability to explain their own thoughts in both classwork and a series of creative homework tasks. There is an end of year exam designed to test a pupil’s philosophical understanding.

### Skills

RE is about developing critical thinking skills and learning how to express ideas clearly and persuasively.







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