**The Independent School: Durham**

**Curriculum Policy**

**Introduction**

The curriculum at IGS: Durham comprises all the planned activities which we organise in order to promote excellent learning and personal growth and development within our children. Our curriculum seeks to ensure that we as a school develop independence and responsibility in all of our pupils. We ensure that all children have a broad, balanced and relevant education which provides continuity and progression and takes individual differences into account. We aim to teach our pupils how to grow into positive, responsible people, who can work and co-operate with others while developing the knowledge and skills which will enable them to achieve their full potential.

The words we use to describe our curriculum are “stretch, enjoyment and academic rigour”. We seek to provide children with a rich knowledge of the best of what has been written, thought and said.

As an independent school, we are not required to follow the National Curriculum. We recognise, however, the excellence of the National Curriculum in many areas, and we will use appropriate resources when we believe them to be in line with our curriculum aims.

The basis of our curriculum will be the Core Knowledge Series of text books produced by Civitas and inspired by the work of E D Hirsch. This series is based on the National Curriculum although the depth with which it treats some topics is greater and its emphases are at times different. It focuses especially, for example, on *knowledge* – a focus with which we fully concur.

A typical school day at IGS: Durham (from Year One onwards) will involve Maths and English in the morning and then a more flexible afternoon which will be designed by the class teacher, and agreed with senior staff, and will involve, among other things, topic work designed to deliver the curriculum in a way that excites and energises children and enables them to learn deeply and respond creatively to what they have learned. All subjects within the curriculum will thus be covered appropriately.

**Values**

Our curriculum is the means by which we achieve our objectives of educating children in the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need in order to lead fulfilling and useful lives. Our school curriculum is underpinned by our school values – Courage, Respect, Excellence, Achievement, Transparency and Respect. This means that we will expect the best of every child, will encourage them to be curious and inquisitive and will provide a learning environment in which they will be able to develop to the absolute summit of their potential.

It also means that we will respond warmly and constructively to less able children and to those with special educational needs. We believe that such children contribute immeasurably to the life of a school and we will nurture them to the best of our ability. In every aspect of the curriculum we will promote the value of equality.

**Aims**

The aims of our school curriculum are:

* To enable all children to learn and develop their academic ability so that they achieve their potential at each stage of school life and are well-prepared for the next stage
* To enable children to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically, morally and aesthetically, so that they become independent thinkers and responsible, useful, confident and considerate members of the community.
* To promote a positive attitude towards learning, so that children enjoy coming to school and develop a love of learning.
* To create, maintain an exciting and stimulating learning environment where all pupils are encouraged to push themselves and take on challenges.
* To provide all children with a safe learning environment.
* To ensure that each child’s education demonstrates continuity and progression.
* To enable children to contribute positively within a culturally diverse society.
* To enable all children to have respect for themselves and others and work cooperatively with others.
* To recognise the crucial role which parents play in their child’s education and make every effort to encourage parental involvement in their educational process
* To help children develop respect for authority, for others, especially those who are different from themselves, and for the world around them.

**The Curriculum**

In the Early Years (i.e. Reception class) we will follow the Early Years Foundation Stage and provide teaching and assessment in line with its requirements. This is set out in the EYFS Curriculum Plan and Scheme of Work.

In the EYFS, children will be taught the seven statutory areas: the Prime areas of Communication & Language, Physical Development and Personal, Social & Emotional Development; and the Specific Areas of Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

From Year One onwards, children will be taught in subjects. The subjects within the curriculum will be:

* **English (we will sometimes refer to it as Language and Literature),**
* **Mathematics,**
* **Nature Study (Science),**
* **History,**
* **Geography,**
* **Religious Education,**
* **Visual Arts,**
* **Music,**
* **Physical Education and**
* **Information Technology**

**In addition we will teach one PSHE lesson per week, and in the Trinity (summer) term of Year One, French will be introduced. French will become a full subject from Year Two onwards. Latin will become a full subject from Year Five onwards.**

Through the curriculum, we aim to equip children with the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will enable them to:

* Be creative, imaginative thinkers
* Be problem solvers
* Be unafraid of making mistakes
* Challenge themselves to do even better
* Be enquiring and able to ask good questions
* Understand their own and others’ emotions and feelings
* Form their own views and be able to articulate them
* Be wholly respectful towards others who are different and/or have different views
* Possess a wide and deep knowledge of the “grammar” of the subjects they study
* Become avid readers
* Have a sound knowledge of what it means to be British and the diverse nature of modern Britain
* Avoid being taken in by spurious arguments
* Be able to act appropriately in a range of “risky” situations
* Develop confidence
* Develop a good sense of humour and a sense of perspective
* Work as part of a team where necessary
* Be aware of how to live a healthy lifestyle
* Enjoy positive relationships with others
* Know the difference between right and wrong
* Know how to care for the environment

The above is not an exhaustive check-list but sets out our priorities for our children’s academic, personal and social development.

**Organisation and Planning**

We will take great care to plan our curriculum carefully, so that there is coherence and progression at every stage. We agree a long term plan for each Year group. This indicates which topics are to be taught in each term, and to which groups of children. We will review our long term plans on an annual basis.

Maths and English will be taught every morning. Afternoon sessions (from Year One onwards) will, as described above, typically involve topic work and will be designed to provide a more flexible approach enabling teachers to cover the necessary material in a particularly enriching and engaging way. Detailed plans for the afternoon curriculum will be drawn up on a termly basis and evaluated by the Executive Principal along with the teachers involved in order to ensure that all subjects are being adequately covered.

**Assessment**

At IGS: Durham we believe that accurate assessment is the basis of high quality teaching, as it allows learning to be planned and taught appropriately to meet the needs of children so that all are helped, stretched and nurtured in the most effective way.

EYFS profiles, produced in line with statutory requirements, provide a basis upon which Year One teachers can build. We will develop those profiles in accordance with the guidance we have included in our EYFS Curriculum Plan.

From Year One onwards, assessment will be carried out in line with our Assessment Policy. Progress in key subjects will be assessed every term and more formally at the end of each school year. Each subject will be reported on to parents at the end of every term.

**Curriculum Monitoring and Review**

Evaluation is essential for the planning and development of the curriculum. The Executive Principal is responsible for the overall school curriculum. He, along with the Head of School where appropriate, will monitor lesson plans, arrange for pupils’ work to be moderated and carry out regular learning walks in order to support teachers as they deliver their plans and develop their knowledge and expertise. The School Board places the quality of teaching at the very top of its list of priorities, and it will actively and formally review the curriculum, its delivery and its effectiveness at least annually. That process will be undertaken by Professor Tooley, the Chairman of the School Board.

The Independent Grammar School: Durham

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