

Curriculum Policy

Senior School



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Adam Westwood (Deputy Head)	August 2026	August 2027

School Aims

The spirit of South Hampstead High School is that of endeavour – personal, intellectual and moral.

We want our pupils to develop a love of learning and curiosity about the world and to fulfil their academic potential, to be confident in who they are, to find their voice and pursue their interests.

We want our pupils to be kind and respectful of others at school and in the world beyond, to appreciate difference, and to develop the perspective to live fulfilled lives in the world beyond school. At South Hampstead we believe that education should be a truly enriching experience, a gift for life. We want our pupils to develop some sense of the sheer size of the world and all there is to learn about it – past, present and future. We believe in the power of knowledge as a tool for thought and creative endeavour, and a source of lifelong inspiration and curiosity.

In and out of the classroom, we want our pupils to find their voice, spoken and written. We want them to explore the big questions, the searching questions, the difficult questions. Debate and discussion lie at the very heart of a South Hampstead education. We aim to create abundant opportunities for creative output and to encourage pupils to take risks. In our teaching, we do what we know works and put research and reflection at the heart of our professional development. Teaching is a noble profession and our staff are central to our success.

We aim to provide outstanding breadth of opportunity in our curricular and co-curricular programme and to open our pupils' minds to a myriad of possibilities. We believe that involvement in school life is a key factor in our pupils' happiness. But it's not just about taking part; we aim to instil in pupils a sense of purpose, pride and determination and the belief that they can compete on the biggest of stages.

We aim to create a warm, tolerant and kind community where girls can be themselves and make friends for life. We want them to play their part in our community and in the community beyond South Hampstead. The 21st century is a time of unique opportunities and challenges; we have a critical role to play in preparing our young women to live and thrive, work and lead in tomorrow's world.

The Aims of the SHHS Curriculum

The Curriculum Policy for the school is in two parts, one for those children aged 4 to 11, and one for those aged 11 to 19. This document outlines the policy for the Senior School (aged 11 to 19).

Our curriculum is key to securing the School's Aims, and particularly in ensuring our pupils are encouraged to aim high, and develop the confidence and tenacity to make their dreams a reality. We aim to foster intellectual spark, creativity and debate, and real joy in learning.

At SHHS, the curriculum is designed to provide a secure and imaginative basis for academic progress at each key stage of a pupil's development. Our intention is that all our girls will develop their own enthusiasms and initiative within a broad educational framework.

The curriculum in both sections of the school aims to provide our pupils with a rich experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education. This is primarily achieved through the breadth of core subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4, as well as through optional subjects in Key Stages 4 and 5, the PSHE program and co-curricular activities, off-timetable days and trips across the Senior School. The curriculum is designed to provide stimulation and subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs (SEN), those for whom English is an additional language (EAL) or those students with an EHC plan. The

content and delivery of our curriculum does not discriminate against pupils with the relevant protected characteristics found in the Equality Act 2010. For further information on our provision for students with additional and special educational needs please see the Special Educational Needs policy.

We believe that the range of subjects in each year group leads to a powerful combination of solid academic grounding and flexibility which caters to the individual needs of pupils. They will acquire skills in speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy.

Throughout our curriculum, as appropriate to the age of the pupil, we promote British values and effective preparation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society, in accordance with the statutory requirements. Further details can be found in the Promotion of British Values and Prevention of Radicalisation Policy, PSHE schemes of work, and subject-specific schemes of work. Our PSHE schemes of work also encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Departments are expected to integrate speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy into their normal classroom practice wherever possible. Some subjects carry more responsibility for progressing students through a particular key skill (e.g. maths and numeracy), but opportunities should be utilised in all subjects when they present themselves (e.g. identifying patterns and correlation in Science). Further details can be found in department schemes of work and department handbooks.

Throughout students' time in the Senior School, they are given up-to-date and accurate careers guidance. Guidance is primarily delivered through our PSHE programme (overseen by the Deputy Head (Pastoral)) and via the school's "Futures Programme" for which the Deputy Head (CCC) is responsible. Careers guidance is presented in an impartial manner, enables our students to make informed choices, and helps to encourage our students to fulfil their potential.

In the Senior School

We encourage stretch and variety. At each stage where choices need to be made, there are systems whereby a pupil can receive advice on how to make sensible decisions. Tutors, Year Heads and mentors guide pupils so that they make the best of the choices on offer in line with their aspirations for the future and the specific requirements of future courses.

The beginning of Year 7 and Year 12 the students are given a special series of orientation activities which enable the pupils to understand the nature of the school and their learning over the coming years. This involves at least one afternoon off timetable with activities on topics such as 'study skills', 'noting and revision strategies' or 'coping with work pressures'. The aim is to encourage pupils to have a secure grasp of the challenges offered by the curriculum they will face. The advice from the careers team complements this advice and enables pupils to consider their future aspirations with the relevant specialist advice. The work on careers is also part of the personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHE) programme, which is taught in all year groups, reflecting the aims and aspirations of the school.

In addition to timetabled lessons in academic subjects, our students are provided with a rich programme of co-curricular activities, visiting lecturers and trips which are planned to meet their needs and offered by staff as part of the whole school enrichment programme. We view co-curricular activities as essential complements to the formal taught curriculum. A huge range of societies provides pupils and staff with further opportunities to enrich their experiences in a wide variety of fields.

The curriculum structure is reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Department and also occasionally by designated working groups which evaluate the effectiveness of provision. The pupils' School Council also makes suggestions on the content and delivery of the curriculum. Meetings between Senior School Heads of Department and Junior School Subject Coordinators are held to encourage a creative reflection on the links between the two schools' curricula.

The GDST also provides INSET on key educational themes. Staff are encouraged to attend INSET, either within the School, through the GDST or with outside agencies, to enhance professional standards in delivery of the agreed curriculum and also to cultivate a constructively critical approach to the curriculum.

Below is a summary of the curriculum for each year group, indicating allocation of teaching periods and a brief rationale for the distributions. There are 45 period slots each week, with each periods lasting 35 minutes. Six periods per day are before the lunch break, and three afterwards. Many lessons are taught as double periods.

Year 7

Pupils follow a core curriculum. There is a free choice of modern language between French, Spanish, German and Mandarin. Sciences are taught as discrete subjects.

Subject	Lesson allocation	Further Comment
Mathematics	5	
English	5	
Biology	2	
Chemistry	2	
Physics	2	
French Spanish German Mandarin	4	
Classics/Latin	2	
History	2	
Geography	2	
Philosophy & Religion	2	
Design Technology	2	To reduce class sizes, two forms make three DT groups
Art	2	To reduce class sizes, two forms make three Art groups
Drama	2	
Music	2	
Physical Education	4	
Computing	2	
PSHE	2	
Oracy	1	

Pupils are taught in form groups (except for MFL); set sizes are around 24-26.

Year 8

The Y7 core curriculum is extended to include a second modern language. Philosophy & Religion now has a double period each week.

Subject	Lesson allocations	Further Comment
Mathematics	4	
English	4	
Biology	2	
Chemistry	2	
Physics	2	
Two of: French Spanish German Mandarin	4 for 1 st MFL 3 for 2 nd MFL	
Classics/Latin	2	
Computer Science	2	This provision is new to Year 8 from September 2022
History	2	
Geography	2	
Philosophy & Religion	2	
Design Technology	2	To reduce class sizes, two forms make three DT groups
Art	2	To reduce class sizes, two forms make three Art groups
Drama	2	
Music	2	
Physical Education	4	
PSHE	2	

Pupils are taught in teaching groups (which are not equivalent to form groups), except for Mathematics for which they are set. MFL also sets classes where the timetable allows this to happen.

Year 9

Subject	Lesson allocations	Further Comment
Mathematics	4	
English	4	
Biology	2	
Chemistry	2	
Physics	2	
Two of: French Spanish German Mandarin	3 for 1 st MFL 3 for 2 nd MFL	
Classics/Latin	3	
Computer Science	2	This provision is new to Year 9 from September 2022
History	2	
Geography	2	
Philosophy & Religion	2	
Design Technology	2	To reduce class sizes, two forms make three DT groups
Art	2	To reduce class sizes, two forms make three Art groups
Drama	2	
Music	2	
Physical Education	4	
PSHE	2	

In the second term of Year 9 pupils select their GCSE options. For details, please see the GCSE Options Booklet.

Year 10/11: GCSE

It is our intention that every girl benefits as much as possible from the challenges and opportunities presented by all that is on offer during their GCSE years at South Hampstead. This is the time to lay down the foundations for A Level and university study, and for students to focus their learning into the areas that most interest them. Girls are encouraged to take a more independent approach to their work and develop the kind of study skills and thought processes that will ensure them later success in whatever field they opt to pursue.

In choosing subjects in addition to the core of compulsory subjects, we recommend that pupils opt for quality not quantity. Most girls will study a total of 10 GCSEs or 9 GCSEs and one School Directed Course. Some girls, with the Head's agreement, may opt for fewer than two optional subjects, particularly those with a heavy co-curricular commitment, for example, to music or sport in and outside of school. We stress to pupils that it is sensible to remember that universities and employers are interested in high grades at GCSE, not the number of GCSE awards.

For students who wish to take Classical Greek it is required that they also study Latin. Because of this there is the option to take this as an 11th subject, though this is not required.

GCSE SUBJECTS

Compulsory Core Subjects for GCSE

English
English Literature
Mathematics
The Sciences: Separate Sciences (three GCSEs) **or** Trilogy Science (two GCSEs)
One Modern Language: French, German, Spanish **or** Mandarin
On Humanity: History **or** Geography **or** Philosophy & Religion

Optional Subjects for GCSE

Art
Classical Greek
Computer Science
Design Technology: Product Design
Drama
Fashion & Textiles
Geography
History
Latin
Music
Additional Modern Language(s)
Philosophy & Religion
GSCE Physical Education

Scholarship through Speech (School Directed Course)

Compulsory non-examined subjects

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)
Physical Education

Years 10 and Year 11

Subject	Lesson allocations	Further comment
Mathematics	5	Maths is usually taught in 5 sets. Students are also able to study the Further Mathematics GCSE course, either in lessons or after school. (See Mathematics handbook.)
English	5 (6 in Y11)	English usually has 5 groups.
Biology	4	There are usually 4 or 5 groups at GCSE. A separate group follows the Trilogy Science (Dual Award) course, with 3 period a each week for each science.
Chemistry	4	
Physics	4	
Computing	4	
Product Design / Fashion & Textiles	4	
Art	4	
GCSE Physical Education	4	
Modern Language 1	4	
Modern Language 2	4	
Latin	4	
Greek	4	
History	4	
Geography	4	
Scholarship Through Speech (School Directed Course)	4	This course takes the place of a GCSE but is not examined externally. Students will receive an internally generated grade at the end of the course.
Philosophy & Religion	4	
Music	4	
Drama	4	
PE	4	Students studying Classical Greek as an 11 th subject will lose one of their PE periods.
PSHE	1	
Private Study		Pupils whose subject combinations create free lessons have supervised private study periods.

The Sixth Form

A detailed description of the syllabuses and co-curricular opportunities is available in the Sixth Form handbook and prospectus.

1:1 options interviews take place during the autumn term of Year 11, with senior teachers advising students on the possible combinations at A Level. Students also receive detailed careers advice to help with their eventual choices, under the remit of the Deputy Head (CCC).

The Sixth Form timetable is constructed around the initial student options; a blocking structure is based on pupil choices and every attempt is made to provide the requested subjects, though this is not always possible in every case.

In the Lower Sixth, students choose four subjects, and some will continue with four subjects into the Upper Sixth. Lower Sixth students may choose to relinquish their fourth subject following the February Half Term. It is compulsory for all students to pick up the Extended Project Qualification alongside their A levels, though not all students will complete this course. There are a number of routes available for students wishing to take Further Maths, both AS and A Level, depending on their other choices.

In addition to the formal examined subjects, Lower Sixth pupils have two periods per week of "Great Ideas" lectures in Autumn term and they then pick up project work in the Spring term. In the Upper Sixth, pupils have a range of speakers through the Upper Sixth Speaker Series; some are academic, others deal with PSHE issues. From the Spring term of the Lower Sixth, through until the end of the Autumn term in the Upper Sixth, students have a single period of academic enrichment each week. They also continue to have PE lessons throughout Sixth Form.

A Levels in the Lower Sixth have eight periods per week, with this increasing to nine periods per week for the Upper Sixth. Potential A Level options are:

English Literature	Philosophy & Religion
Maths	Latin
Further Maths	Greek
Biology	Classical Civilisation
Chemistry	History of Art
Physics	Art
French	Computing
German	Music
Spanish	Drama
Mandarin	Design Technology
Geography	Economics
History	Psychology
Politics	HSK Level 4 (taken in addition to 4 A-levels)