

Newbury Hall School Curriculum Policy

1) Introduction

Newbury Hall School is committed to delivering the highest standard of education to all overseas students regardless of their ability or nationality. The choice of subjects will always be in line with the aims of the student and their parents, subject to the advice and expertise of the school.

The very small classes at Newbury Hall allow the school a very high degree of individualisation, and this makes it possible to achieve high quality results without resorting to a selective policy at the application stage. Newbury Hall School is open to any motivated student who is able to pay the fees.

As the aims of the parents are usually highly targeted on UK Universities, the demand is for the curriculum and subject choice to be instrumental to this aim. While Newbury Hall School understands and responds to this parental requirement, we also believe that is necessary to deliver a broader based education, particularly for students at the lower end of our age-range.

It is acceptable to us that students doing A-levels should specialise and should focus intensely on three subjects plus the English Language.

All our students are non-native speakers of English. They require, and regularly achieve, high grades in all subjects. This feat is made possible by a large section of each timetable being allotted to English Language lessons, and by a focus on study skills.

Our policy of being non-selective is an arduous one for us to maintain, and it is made possible by devoting large amounts of teaching resources to students who need it.

Aims

All students have a right to a thorough and relevant education which provides continuity and progression and takes individual differences into account. Work in school should be designed to meet the students' long term aims and ambitions.

The school should:

- accommodate the needs of individual students of both sexes from overseas, from the most able to those who are find learning a struggle;
- help all students to develop the language skills and study skills that will enable them to pursue their studies to the highest level in the UK;
- help students to achieve the highest academic level of which they are capable;
- facilitate students' acquisition of knowledge, skills and qualities which will help them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically, and morally, so that they may become independent, responsible, useful, thinking, confident and considerate adults.
- create and maintain a stimulating learning environment;
- ensure that each student's education has continuity and progression;
- ensure that there is a match between the student and the tasks he/she is asked to perform;
- treat students in a dignified way.

Students should:

- learn how to study and how to develop first-class language skills;
- do their best to maximize their own potential;
- learn to obey rules and develop a sense of themselves as members of a community governed by rules;
- develop tolerance, respect and appreciation of the feelings and capabilities of others;
- learn to be adaptable, how to solve problems in a variety of situations, how to work independently and as members of a team;
- develop the ability to make reasoned judgements and choices, based on interpretation and evaluation of relevant information from a variety of sources;
- be cheerful and co-operative;
- be enthusiastic and eager to put their best into all activities;
- begin acquiring a set of moral values, e.g. honesty, hard work, personal responsibility; on which to base their own behaviour;
- behave in a dignified and acceptable way and be responsible for their actions;
- care for and take pride in their school;
- develop non-sexist and non-racist attitudes;
- know how to think and solve problems mathematically in a variety of situations using concepts of number, algebra, measurement, shape and space, and handling data;
- be able to listen and read for a variety of purposes and be able to convey meaning accurately and appropriately through speech and writing;
- develop an enquiring mind and a scientific approach to problems;
- have an opportunity to solve problems using intellectual and technological skills;
- know about geographical, historical and social aspects of the world: be aware of other times and places and recognise links between family, national and international events;
- learn how to debate and how to spot specious arguments
- have some knowledge of the beliefs of the major world religions and humanist value systems;
- know how to apply the basic principles of health, hygiene and safety.

2) Timetabling

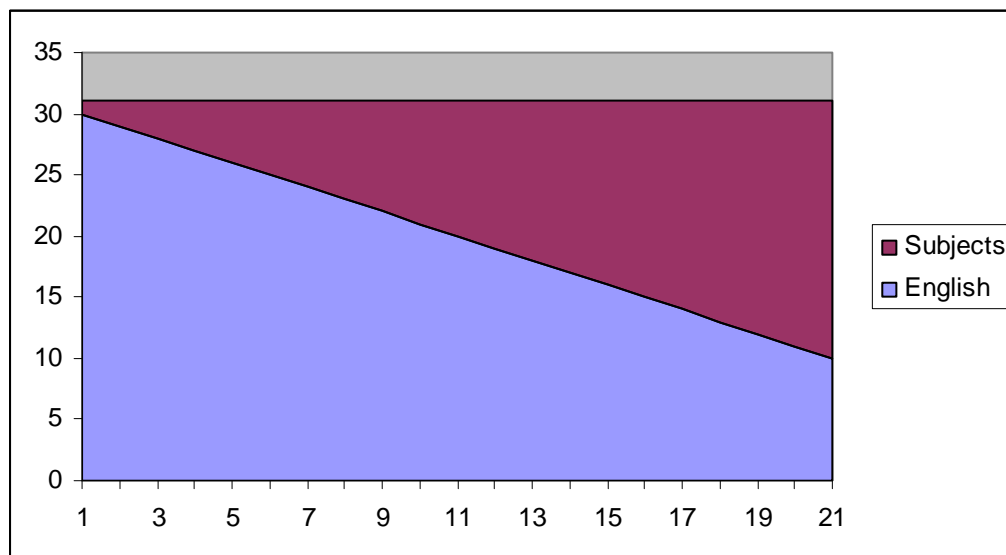
A key part of our curriculum planning is our timetabling. Unlike most schools, our student numbers are small and our staff-teacher ratios are very high. We are therefore able to deliver highly personalised timetables directed at developing students in weak areas and building on strengths. Our maximum class size is 8, and between 10% and 30% of our lessons are delivered one-to-one.

3) Core Curriculum

- 3.1 Linguistic
- 3.2 Mathematical
- 3.3 Science
- 3.4 IT
- 3.5 Humanities
- 3.6 Financial
- 3.7 Physical

3.1 Linguistic

With a minimum of 5 and sometimes as many as a dozen languages in the school, we have a rich fund of linguistic awareness. This is an English medium school and each student will receive a substantial number of lessons in English language. This number can be plotted on a declining axis, with the subject lesson on rising axis, as English language skills improve.



Most of our students arrive with an estimated English vocabulary level of between 1,000, and 2,000 words. We estimate that in order to attain an ‘A’ at A-level it is necessary to have an operating vocabulary of around 4000 words. This excludes vocabulary specific to the subject.

Obviously this is a significant challenge and requires extraordinary measures. This detailed and exceptional attention to language tuition running concurrently with subjects delivers an unusual level of support and development.

We do not generally offer GCSE and A-level English, as these exams are not in demand among our students and present contextual difficulties, often unintended by the examiners for students whose cultural background is not English. Instead we prefer to use the IELTS examination, which is an international test of English language competence offered twice a year. It is suitable for all students with a language level above CEFR B2, and is the preferred test of proficiency for UK universities. This test is taken by all Newbury Hall students twice a year, at the end of the autumn and spring terms.

3.2 Mathematical

In a sense Mathematics can be seen as a language, being “a mode of communication based upon symbolic reference”, as T. W. Deacon put it in *The Symbolic Species*. For many of our Chinese students in particular, accustomed as they are to learning large numbers of symbols with out even a link to the phonemes of the various languages they represent, mathematics may present less of a challenge than English, and provides a comprehensible grounding in

unfamiliar cultures and access to a world-wide scientific and mathematical community.

Mathematics also opens the door to vast areas of studies and careers, and develops skills of logical thought that are to some extent transferable to other disciplines.

Students who have difficulty with mathematics are not left in a class to despair and struggle alone but are taught separately – individually if necessary. In this way we have got several ‘math phobic’ students through GCSE and A-levels.

Mathematics teaching at Newbury Hall is based on the GCSE and A-level syllabuses and supplemented according to the needs and interest of the students. Exceptional students are encouraged to take Further Maths.

Mathematics is a key area of the Newbury Hall Curriculum and we are proud of our results.

3.3 Science

Science is the understanding of the physical world, and our common environment, and is both an area of understand transcending cultural and a rational discipline with a critical methodology that has a wide application to other areas of study and understanding.

Scientific qualifications are a pre-requisite for many careers.

This is a relatively new area of study for Newbury Hall, and we have recently equipped a mini science laboratory capable of meeting the needs of up to 8 students at GCSE. A-level students are taught by agreement at St. Bartholomew’s School, with backup lessons provided by Newbury Hall teachers.

Students who are on courses leading up to GCSE are given an “Introduction to Science” course, which is designed to waken and at least partly satisfy their natural curiosity. This involves an extended and planned encounter with scientific concepts, methodology and terminology to prepare them for exam courses when their language level permits.

3.4 IT

Computer literacy has become so basic a tool for all commercial, academic and industrial environments that anyone without at least basic skills is effectively unable to operate in the modern world. Internet research, presentations, reports spreadsheets and documents of all kinds require effective computer know how. The operation of electronic storage and retrieval systems is the basic key to information access.

The curriculum is designed to allow students to be at ease and proficient in the virtual world and to avoid its many dangers. As well as the normal proficiency lessons, students receive guidance on gaming addiction, chat room hazards, and how to avoid plagiarism.

Our lowest level students are trained up following the syllabus of ECDL. They also go on to do Business and Communication Systems and Computing examinations.

We do not accept that there is any student who is not able to do IT, and we find that many students who were struggling with pen and paper find computers much easier. Computers are a liberating equalising and enabling technology

3.5 Humanities

Although many of our parents and students have a very focussed and instrumental view of education and only wish for a very limited range of subjects, we believe that this is not in the interest of the child. Students need the larger context to make sense of the information that they gather so assiduously and sooner or later they will need to have a look at the big picture, and understand the society in which they live. Additionally much learning, even scientific and mathematical is context dependent, and without the context there is little possibility of understanding the key content.

Formally we offer History Geography and Art at GCSE: in addition we feed into lessons elements of philosophy, politics, critical thinking, psychology, current affairs and ethics. We have a General Knowledge cup which is fought for in inter-house competitions.

In RE we teach respect and tolerance for other religions. We allow the students if they wish to present their religions, with help and backup for resources from staff. Basic information about every major religious position is put forward without judgement or preference. This helps to develop an understanding of other cultures, which is backed up by our PSHE programme and our cross cultural training initiatives. We are careful to do nothing that might alarm parents or would leave our students exposed to persuasive speakers and preachers at a vulnerable time in their lives. None of our students settle in the UK, and some of them are returning to countries where religion is not a lifestyle choice.

Our PSHE programme (Personal Social and Health Education) is extensive, and introduces students to a range of topics relevant to their age. The aim is to develop self-awareness and understanding and respect for others, and to help them to address issues that may encounter in their daily and to help to prepare them for any possible difficulties. Speakers are invited in on a regular basis to give talks on a variety of themes of interest to the students, including careers, health, relationships and hobbies.

3.6 Financial

Because the parents of many of our students are business people, they have a wish that their children should carry on and further develop the family business. For this reason we have a substantial input on Business Studies (a core subject at all levels) and in accounting (a popular A-level option). There are also occasional talks from entrepreneurs and successful business people.

3.7 Physical

We provide a range of opportunities for sport and other physical activities for our students. In addition to universal love of football, we offer coaching in basketball and badminton. We offer support and transport for any major activity the student wishes to take part in such as sport and horse riding.

Recent school trips have included an adventure weekend to the Brecon Beacons in Wales and skiing and snowboarding in the SnoDome in Milton Keynes.