



Curriculum Policy



Approved by	Governance Board
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Policy Owner	Vice Principal i/c Curriculum & Assessment



1. Intent

- 1.1 The curriculum at North Halifax Grammar School (NHGS) reflects our ethos and aims. It is challenging, broad and balanced, and knowledge engaged. At NHGS we believe that E.D Hirsch is right to argue that knowledge underpins and enables the application of skills; both are entwined. At NHGS we strive for academic excellence and also understand the importance of preparing students for life beyond these walls. Therefore, the curriculum at NHGS is designed to support the school's vision, best summed up in its motto, "Living to Learn, Learning to Live".
- 1.2 At NHGS we are committed to a broad and balanced curriculum which includes English, Maths, Science and Religious Personal Social Education, Humanities, Modern Foreign Languages, Information Communication Technology, Physical Education and the Arts. (See Appendix 1 for full details.) Our curriculum is based on the most up-to-date research and guidance. At NHGS we are quite rightly proud of our curriculum and constantly evaluate its intent, implementation and impact in order to make further improvements.
- 1.3 At NHGS we set out to develop the very best historians, linguists and scientists, etc. Departments challenge students to think, act and behave as those working in their field would. Primarily we do this by building the academic vocabulary of our students and by ensuring that, where possible, students complete domain specific tasks. We also ask colleagues to regularly model their own thought processes to students. These metacognitive exercises give our students an insight into how experts in their fields would tackle certain pieces of work. We strive for the best, and look to impart knowledge and skills beyond national curriculum guidelines and exam specifications.
- 1.4 The curriculum at NHGS goes far beyond what is taught in lessons, for whilst we want students to achieve the very best examination results possible, we believe our curriculum goes beyond what is examinable. At NHGS we strive to be the school everyone wishes they went to. Teachers use their 'hinterland' knowledge (Christine Counsell) to teach beyond the test, enriching students' experiences and engaging them through fascination and challenge. While the 'taught' or 'lesson based' curriculum is one component, the wider curriculum encompasses the "totality of students' lived experiences at school", starting with the receptionist's smile and ending...who knows where? Because of this, the school is committed to building the Cultural Capital of all of our students, in particular, the most disadvantaged.
- 1.5 One of our curriculum strengths is that we help students to know more by remembering more. Learning in all subjects is carefully sequenced to help students recall knowledge and skills, and commit them to long term memory.
- 1.6 Our curriculum intersects with our ethos statement, which in turn develops the ideas in our vision statement which are most simply expressed in the motto, "Living to Learn; Learning to Live". The ethos statement identifies the values, qualities and behaviours that we live out daily at NHGS. The letters E, C and M come from two sources, the phrase 'Every Child Matters' and from Einstein's famous formula $E = MC^2$. These two sources reflect our belief in the importance of respect for every individual and our historic designation as a former specialist science college.
- 1.7 The development of nine key values and their associated behaviours are key to our ever-evolving curriculum. Our Mission Statement is to be a school where our behaviours create excellence and the ethos statement spells out the relevant behaviours we expect everyone to exhibit. Whilst

students gain knowledge, we also wish them to become learners who are enquiring, enthusiastic, engaged, creative, confident, co-operative, mindful, motivated and mannerly.



1.8 The school curriculum should:

- 1.8.1 Satisfy future economic needs for individuals and for the workforce as a whole, including the development of secure knowledge and skills in communication, literacy and mathematics, and confidence in acquiring new knowledge and skills;
- 1.8.2 Help students to appreciate the national cultures, traditions and values of the UK, whilst celebrating diversity and encouraging responsible citizenship;
- 1.8.3 Provide opportunities for participation in a broad range of educational experiences and the acquisition of knowledge and appreciation in the arts, sciences and humanities;
- 1.8.4 Support personal development and empowerment so that each student is able to develop as a healthy, balanced and self-confident individual and fulfil their educational and personal potential.

1.9 It is our intention to lay secure foundations for progression into Further and Higher Education and we consider preparation for Sixth Form Advanced Level study to be a key feature of our 11-16 education. Our curriculum also includes a wide variety of enrichment activities and extracurricular trips.

- 1.10 We wrote the following piece as a “mini-vision” for learning and teaching at NHGS. It is written from the point of view of a typical NHGS classroom and describes what the room experiences each day the school is open for business:

A Life in a Day: The NHGS Classroom

Darkness, then light. Silence, then life.

A class enters, yearning for inspiration and challenge; expecting excellence.

Questions fly from all sides and answers grow: individuals, pairs, groups come together and break apart to push back the boundaries of knowledge. Variety, diversity, inclusivity. Attention to the matter in hand – to the big picture, to the minutiae.

The classroom swells with pride to see its purpose fulfilled. This is truly living to learn.

The students and the teacher scale their mountains; some grow weary and need support while others grow braver and take on tougher challenges. All look to the summit.

They are no longer where they began. They have scaled their alps, and glow with pride.

The class leaves, inspired and challenged; carrying excellence with them as a badge of honour.

Light, then darkness. Life, then silence.

The classroom longs for tomorrow.

2. Implementation

- 2.1 Lessons are taught by highly qualified staff who are subject experts wherever possible. Departments are well resourced and use detailed schemes of work across all Key Stages, with centralised and standardised assessments.
- 2.2 Teachers are encouraged to deliver creative, dynamic and challenging lessons which build students’ confidence and cultural capital.

2.3 Good Practice

- 2.3.1 Teachers use the framework of the 10 Golden Rules* and use their professional discretion when applying them with their teaching groups;
- 2.3.2 Subject matter is presented clearly, promoting appropriate discussion about the content in hand;
- 2.3.3 Learners’ understanding is systematically checked, identifying misconceptions accurately and providing clear, direct feedback;
- 2.3.4 Teachers respond to live assessment and adapt their teaching as necessary;
- 2.3.5 Teachers have high expectations of learners; learners should regularly experience “intellectual struggle” in lessons. Challenge in lessons is assured through practices specified in the NHGS Challenge Agenda framework;
- 2.3.6 Over time, teaching is designed to help learners to commit to long term memory the content they have been taught and to integrate new knowledge into larger concepts using the NHGS 5 Memory Strategies amongst others;

- 2.3.7 NHGS teachers use assessment well, for example, to help learners embed and use knowledge fluently, or to check understanding and inform teaching;
- 2.3.8 NHGS teachers create an environment that allows learners to focus on learning. A calm and positive learning environment is maintained through the consistent application of the SHARP system (in-classroom behaviour for learning initiative);
- 2.3.9 The resources and materials that teachers select reflect the school's ambitious intentions for the course of study and clearly support the intent of a coherently planned curriculum;
- 2.3.10 High order vocabulary and subject specialist vocabulary are taught systematically and learners are encouraged to develop fluency and articulacy in oral and written communication; (See Appendix 2.)
- 2.3.11 Teachers are encouraged to use ICT appropriately to enhance learning;
- 2.3.12 From the beginning of Year 7, students begin to receive specific careers guidance through form time and other sources enabling them to appreciate the full range of pathways available to them. Individual subjects also make reference to knowledge and skills that will be useful in specific careers and employment in general.
- 2.3.13 Homework should always be purposeful and add value to student learning; (See Appendix 3.)

*Please see the school website for further information on the 10 Golden Rules and Challenge Agenda.

3 Impact

- 3.1 We continuously measure the impact of our curriculum at North Halifax Grammar School. We understand student outcomes to be one barometer of its success. External and internal data is analysed forensically. When student outcomes are positive we look to celebrate success and share best 'curriculum practice'. When student outcomes are less robust we approach it with an inquisitive mind-set and reflect on what lessons are to be learnt. The curriculum at North Halifax is under constant review and the process of data analysis plays a part in this.
- 3.2 Student destinations offer us another way to measure the impact of our curriculum. We set out to equip our students with the knowledge, skills and understanding to navigate life with confidence and set courses of their own choosing. We have years of successfully preparing students for university and employment; the best courses and the best jobs and careers. Students are actively involved in this process.
- 3.3 The impact of our curriculum at North Halifax goes beyond exam results. Our vision at NHGS is to be the school that everyone wishes they went to: **where enthusiasm is infectious and excellence is standard**; where co-operation is at the heart of all we do; where everyone strives to achieve their goals and is mindful of the right ways to do so. With this in mind we believe the impact of our curriculum is discernible through students' participation in extracurricular activities. We monitor attendance of students, in particular of groups such as Disadvantaged and Ethnic Minorities. Our students' demonstrations of excellent performance in the arts, sporting and other enrichment activities gives us a sense of pride in the personal development aspect of our curriculum.
- 3.4 Furthermore, we look to measure the impact of the hidden curriculum through the demonstrations of the nine behaviours in the ethos wheel, both in observation and as recorded in SIMS. We are developing our community engagement further and see this as a priority moving forwards.

A rigorous quality assurance calendar that includes learning walks, lesson observations, work scrutiny and quality assurance of curriculum planning and school priorities is in place. The meaningful discussions

that happen around this process (peer to peer, heads of department to colleagues and the Leadership Group) enable us to continuously improve the curriculum and its impact.

3.5 Our curriculum is under constant review. We believe that student, parental and staff voices are powerful ways of measuring the impact of our curriculum. We work collaboratively as a community to make sure that our curriculum is constantly developing and improving. We understand this is a process that will never be complete but collectively we strive to make our curriculum the very best it can be.

Appendix 1

The academic curriculum offer at NHGS consists of:

4.0 Key Stage 3

In Key Stage 3, students follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Subject experts have planned units of work that intend to develop both skills and knowledge. Programmes of study for every subject are published on the school website.

- 4.1 Year 7 students follow courses in English, Maths, Science, French, Spanish, Geography, History, RPSE, ICT, Art, Design & Technology, Music, and Cultural Studies
- 4.2 Year 8 students follow courses in English, Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, French, Spanish, PE, Geography, History, RPSE, Art, Design & Technology, ICT, Music, and Cultural Studies
- 4.3 Year 9 students follow courses in English, Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, PE, Geography, History, RPSE, Art, Technology, ICT and Music. Students study either French or Spanish unless a Dual Linguist. Dual Linguists complete their Religious Studies GCSE at the end of Year 11.
- 4.4 Our curriculum goes beyond the academic. A wide range of enrichment activities and extracurricular trips begin in lower school. This list is not exhaustive but includes the 3 D printing club, Careers Club, Choral Group, Concert Band, Creative Writing, Dance Club, Debating, First Bow, Flute Ensemble, Football, Guitar Ensemble, History Club, Hockey, Percussion Ensemble, Rock Choir, Science Club, St Omer, Theatre Tech, Woodwind Group, Workshop Club and many more. A full list is available separately.

5.0 Key Stage 4

- 5.1 At KS4 we remain committed to a broad and balanced but challenging curriculum.
- 5.2 In Year 9, students select their GCSE courses which they will take in Years 10 and 11. All Year 9 students are provided with advice throughout the school year to help guide them about their GCSE options. The only exception to this is that we ask our students at the end of Year 8 to decide whether they wish to continue with both languages into Year 9. Those students who opt to carry on one language start their GCSE in RS early, with dual linguists starting the GCSE at the beginning of Year 10. Year 9 students have opportunities to talk through their choices with their Student Progress Tutors and a member of the Leadership Group. Further advice comes from a careers unit of work in RPSE and presentations in assemblies. This is followed by a special parents' evening (Key Stage 4 Options Evening) where careers options for each student are also discussed.
- 5.3 The GCSE examinations are completed at the end of Year 11 and include a core of:
 - 5.3.1 English Literature. English Language, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, (three Separate Sciences), or Trilogy Science (2 GCSEs equivalent), MFL (either Spanish or French) and Religious Studies;
 - 5.3.2 Students also choose two or three GCSEs from the following optional subjects. Choice is guided with every effort made to ensure students choose the right course for them.
Art, Business Studies, Computing, Food Preparation and Nutrition, French, Spanish, Geography, History, Physical Education, Psychology, Design & Technology (Product Design), and Music.

- 5.3.3 Most students achieve 10 full GCSE qualifications in total. In addition, students follow non examination courses in PSHE and PE. From 2020, Religious Studies is an early entry GCSE that will be taken at the end of Year 10 by our students.
- 5.3.4 A rich range of enrichment opportunities and extra-curricular trips continue in KS4. This list is not exhaustive but includes the 3 D printing club, Badminton, Camp (Year 9), Choral Group, Concert Band, Creative Writing, Dance Club, Debating, D of E Bronze, First Bow, Flute Ensemble, Football, Guitar Ensemble, Hockey, Percussion Ensemble, Pride (LGBTQ+), Rock Choir, Saxophone Ensemble, Science Club, Theatre Tech, Woodwind Group, Workshop Club and others. A full list is available separately.

6.0 Key Stage 5

- 6.1 In the Sixth Form students choose from up to 25 different linear A Levels. These courses are Art, Biology, Business Studies, Biology, Chemistry, Computing, Design and Technology (Product Design), Economics, English Language, English Literature, Electronics, French, Further Mathematics, Government and Politics, History, Mathematics, Media Studies, Music, PE, Photography, Physics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology, Spanish
- 6.2 All courses are advertised to students when they apply in the autumn term, but courses are offered, subject to demand. All students receive one to one guidance sessions on enrolment. In addition, taster sessions are provided during Year 11 to aid understanding and inform choices. Most students opt for three subjects, though a few choose four.
- 6.3 The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is also on offer. Students find studying individual projects in depth beneficial. Students also have to present their evaluations and findings to an audience. The EPQ qualification perfectly illustrates the commitment to development of both knowledge and skills here at NHGS.
- 6.4 The curriculum at Sixth Form also includes PSCHEE and, in Year 12, a core Enrichment afternoon. PSCHEE continues to develop the life skills of students and is used to help students prepare for UCAS or a career outside of NHGS. Enrichment provides our students with a wide variety of opportunities; these include The Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award, Debating, Young Enterprise, Music, Sport, Work Experience, volunteering in Primary Schools, car maintenance and cooking to name but a few.
- 6.5 A rich plethora of additional enrichment activities are available for our sixth form students to access. These include Bar Mock Trial, Choral Group, Concert Band, Creative Writing, Debating, First Aid, First Bow, Fitness Suite, Flute Ensemble, Football, Guitar Ensemble, MedSoc, New Views Theatre, Oxford/Cambridge Prep, Pride Group (LGBTQ+), Reading ambassadors, Rock Choir, Saxophone Ensemble, TEFL, Theatre Tech, Woodwind Group and others.

Appendix 2

7.0 Communication Across The Curriculum

- 7.4 Aim: To develop excellent literacy and communication skills for all students at NHGS.
- 7.2 Why it is important:
 - 7.2.1 To provide students with the communication skills and experience to access future careers and prepare them for working life;
 - 7.2.3 To build the high level and academic vocabulary of our students to enable them to think, speak and write as those working in specific subjects would;
 - 7.2.4 To support the pursuit of the highest possible examination grades;
 - 7.2.5 To improve life chances.

8.0 Good Practice –communication across the curriculum

8.1 Learning Environment

- 8.1.1 All teachers are teachers of literacy: disciplinary literacy is prioritised.
- 8.1.2 Subject specific key words displayed and taught explicitly;
- 8.1.3 Exemplar displays including spelling in context and examples of planning models for continuous writing tasks where appropriate;
- 8.1.4 Excellent literacy and communication skills at all times should be modelled by staff;
- 8.1.5 Knowledge Organisers containing key vocabulary to be available and in use.

8.2 Speaking and Listening

- 8.2.1 Purposeful discussion of work encouraged and engaged with;
- 8.2.2 Students enabled to discuss their work at the planning stage;
- 8.2.3 Modelling for students the use of formal standard English in speech;
- 8.2.4 Modelling for students high quality talk and talk that models metacognitive reflection
- 8.2.5 Thinking is encouraged before students answer questions;
- 8.2.6 Students are encouraged and challenged to extend or develop initial oral answers;
- 8.2.7 Students are advised on appropriate strategies to improve oral presentation skills.

8.3 Reading

- 8.3.1 Students are directed to, or provided with, a range of reading resources which meet the needs of all students;
- 8.3.2 Students are encouraged to read aloud but, where possible, given an opportunity to read/digest new complex material first, before reading aloud;
- 8.3.3 Students are encouraged to undertake independent reading as part of their learning;
- 8.3.4 Students are encouraged to read subject matter ahead of lessons as well as in them;
- 8.3.5 Reading for pleasure is encouraged and discussed in all subjects, incorporating a wide range of texts and genres;
- 8.3.6 A range of strategies are used when reading which encourage students to engage with texts actively: e.g. highlighting, summarising, condensing, reviewing, evaluating, prioritising and sequencing.
- 8.3.7 Students, especially those with SEND, should not generally be required to read new, complex material aloud without warning or preparation.

9.0 Writing

- 9.1 Legible planning is modelled and expected before continuous writing tasks;
- 9.2 Students are supported to use a range of planning formats which enable them to work effectively:
e.g. mind maps, tables, bullet points;
- 9.3 High standards and consistency of presentation are expected across all age groups;
- 9.4 Students are made aware of the need for the use of Standard English spelling, punctuation and grammar in formal writing;
- 9.5 Students have access to models and are expected to use standard English in writing;
- 9.6 Students are supported to use key terminology correctly;
- 9.7 Students should not be asked to copy out notes from text books/whiteboards or other sources unedited where these could be provided;
- 9.8 Targeted support should be provided where needed.

Appendix 3

10. Homework and Independent Study

- 10.1 Homework is important in order to encourage students to develop the commitment, confidence and motivation needed to study effectively on their own. It promotes resilience and mindful reflection on personal strengths and weaknesses; it gives an opportunity for students to be creative and foster enquiry skills. Homework should always be purposeful and add value to student learning. Homework should have clear links to current, prior or future learning which should be made explicit.
- 10.2 At secondary level, studies indicate there is an optimum of between one and two hours per school day (slightly longer for older students), with effect diminishing as the time that students spend on homework increases beyond this point. (Education Endowment Foundation, Working with Parents to Support Students' Learning, 2018). Deadlines for homework will be made clear and work will be monitored over time, and incomplete homework may receive a comment via the Edulink system.
- 10.3 Parents and carers are asked to support their child by monitoring the Student Planner regularly and taking an interest in the completion of homework. An initial conversation with the child is important to first establish any issues relating to homework or reasons behind homework comments received via the Edulink system. In the case of serious concerns, contacting the subject teacher or Student Progress Tutor via a note in the planner or email is recommended. Help will be given if staff know it is necessary.
- 10.4 In addition to official homework that is set, students are strongly encouraged to partake in independent study. This may take the form of memorising information from Knowledge Organisers, self-quizzing or completing practice questions on a topic. This is initiated by the student themselves; not the teacher. Students at KS5 (Y12 and 13) should be using study periods for such independent study; this plays a crucial part in success at A level.

11. Homework Good Practice at NHGS

- 11.1 NHGS Leaders recognise that learning works differently in different subjects and therefore there is no one size fits all approach. Subject teams should plan homework so that it aids the delivery of their own curriculum and assists students in learning and retaining more information and skills. The following ideas are offered as examples of good practice to be used as appropriate by teachers at their professional discretion:
- 11.1.1 Lagged homeworks or tasks involving previous learning/memory based tasks are recommended; Automated/self-marked homework tasks are strongly encouraged e.g. multiple-choice questions using google forms, Seneca, Kahoot, Kerboodle, Blooket and Language Perfect;
- 11.1.2 Feedback should not be overly onerous; live marking, verbal feedback, overview sheets and deep marking just one section of a homework are preferred;
- 11.1.3 Self and peer marking of homework should be used regularly;
- 11.1.4 Homework should be set when deemed appropriate and in line with the school homework timetable for that particular year group; homework timetables are published on the website;
- 11.1.5 Student planners should be out at the start of the lesson, open at the current week;
- 11.1.6 Students record homework in their student planners and it is posted on the Google Classroom; this enables Student Progress Tutors, Pastoral staff and parents to check that the work given has been completed.

- 11.1.7 Homework should be set at the beginning of the lesson or part way through, not in a rush at the end;
- 11.1.8 Teachers use “assignments” on Google Classroom to set significant homework tasks;
- 11.1.9 Students have at least 48 hours to complete homework tasks;
- 11.1.10 If homework is not completed (when set) and if no reasonable excuse is given, a behaviour comment is logged (in line with SHARP) and students have until the following lesson to submit it. If not submitted then and no reasonable excuse is given, students complete a departmental detention where they complete the outstanding homework.
- 11.1.11 New homework deadlines and arrangements can be brokered with specific students, but if agreed deadlines are still missed teachers should follow the step above;
- 11.1.12 Achievement comments are regularly awarded for homework tasks;
- 11.1.13 During exams season (internal and external), no homework will be set 3 weeks prior to allow for independent preparation and revision.