



# Curriculum Policy



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# North Halifax Grammar School Curriculum Policy

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## Curriculum Aims

### Living to Learn & Learning to Live

We want our students to learn how to live. To develop character and values that will sustain them and others as they go through life. We want them to learn how to be happy and to positively impact the lives of others.

**Learning to live** requires young people to grow in understanding the value of love, happiness, health and belonging. With us they learn how to live fully and completely, to be the best version of themselves.

**Living to Learn.** We expect our students to discover their passion, their element. To light a fire within that will burn bright throughout their lives. To discover and sustain a sense of curiosity and wonder about themselves and the world.

Our curriculum is designed to support these goals and to prepare our young people to be knowledgeable, creative thinkers, able to question, challenge and form their own opinions. We wish our students to know and understand the very best of what has been thought and said and to become inquiring scholars. Most importantly we want them to experience a sense of wonder about the world and become lifelong learners.

Our curriculum is based on the principles of the Trivium and students are taught to consolidate grammar, apply and interrogate knowledge through dialectic and learn to communicate in a range of ways using proficient rhetoric. They move from being Novices in Year 7-9 where they learn about the world and gain knowledge and begin to apply reasoning, to Experts in Years 10 and 11 where they consider their position in the world and apply reasoning proficiently. Our aim is for students in the NHGS Sixth to leave us with a full understanding of how to take their place in the world as wise scholars.

Our curriculum aims to:

- Support personal development and empowerment so that each student develops the character and cultural awareness to develop as a healthy, balanced and self-confident individual and contribute to society. Our Ambit programme includes a wide variety of enrichment activities and extracurricular trips.
- Develop students' scholarly approach and to help them to develop enquiring minds, the flexibility of thought and attention to detail, and the eloquence and resilience to equip them for life.
- Provide a broad and balanced education for all students that is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge for skills and future learning and employment in a global workforce.
- Ensure equal access to learning for all students, with high expectations for every student and appropriate levels of challenge and support.
- Help students to appreciate the national cultures, traditions and values of the UK, whilst celebrating diversity and encouraging responsible citizenship.

These curriculum aims are underpinned by our values: Respect, Scholarship, Resilience, Social Conscience and Integrity.

## Implementation

Departments are well resourced and use detailed schemes of work across all Key Stages, with centralised and standardised assessments. Learning in all subjects is carefully sequenced to help students recall knowledge and skills, and commit them to long term memory.

Highly qualified academic staff model and promote scholarship inspiring students to be scholars. They articulate and use the principles of the Trivium and demonstrate how they apply to their subjects.

The curriculum at NHGS is delivered through an approach known as the Trivium which is designed to facilitate challenge and consistent academic rigour. The term "Trivium" comes from the Latin for the phrase "where three roads meet" - and consists of three elements.

Grammar	Dialectic	Rhetoric
This is knowledge - and the ability to understand and secure knowledge, and to appreciate how this fits into a broader picture.	This is the art of investigating or discussing the truth of opinions. Dialectic includes mathematical and scientific reasoning, argument and debate, and the development of character.	This is the ability to express and articulate ideas in a range of ways such as writing, performances, designs and creations.

Teachers have high expectations of learners; learners should regularly experience "intellectual struggle" and develop resilience.

- Learners' grammar is taught clearly and their understanding is systematically checked, identifying misconceptions accurately and providing clear, direct feedback;
- Opportunities for dialectic are promoted and students are encouraged to interrogate information, consider different sides of an argument, and to listen carefully to and build on the contributions of others. Students explore new concepts and to make discoveries via experiment, deduction and reasoning.
- Teachers respond to live assessment and adapt their teaching as necessary.
- Students develop metacognitive strategies becoming independent, self-regulating learners
- Over time, teaching is designed to help learners to commit to long term memory the content they have been taught and to integrate new grammar, making connections.

The resources and materials, including wider reading, that teachers select reflect the school's ambitious intentions for the course of study and clearly support the intent of a coherently planned curriculum;

- High order vocabulary and subject specialist vocabulary are taught systematically through modelling, reading materials and display;  
Departments challenge students to think, act and behave as those working in their field would. Staff model high quality rhetoric and learners develop proficiency in rhetoric through being challenged and supported to communicate fluently both orally and in writing.
- Regular assessment is planned into the curriculum; (See Assessment Policy)
- Homework should always be purposeful and add value to student learning; (See the Homework Policy.)

## Impact

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. The curriculum at North Halifax is under constant review and quality assurance, surveys and other forms of staff, student and parental voice, data analysis and reviews by external bodies inform decision-making.

Student destinations offer us another way to measure the impact of our curriculum. Nearly all students go on to study courses of their choice at University or are accessing degree Apprenticeships.

All students' participation in extracurricular activities is also monitored. 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.

Furthermore, we look to measure the impact of the hidden curriculum through the demonstrations of the five core values.

## **Curriculum Content: The Wonder Years**

The academic curriculum offer at NHGS consists of:

### **Character and Culture**

All students follow the [Character and Culture](#) curriculum designed to acquire the confidence, resilience and curiosity to successfully negotiate the modern world.

### **Key Stage 3 – Myself and the World**

Key Stage 3 students follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Subject experts have planned units of work that intend to build on both skills and knowledge acquired at primary school.

- Year 7 and 8 students follow courses in English, Maths, Science, French, Spanish, Geography, History, RPE (Religion, Philosophy and Ethics), Computer Science, Physical Education, Art, Design & Technology, Music, Drama
- Year 9 students follow courses in English, Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, French and/or Spanish, Physical Education, Geography, History, RPE (Religion, Philosophy and Ethics), , Art, Design & Technology, Computer Science and Music.

### **Key Stage 4 – Myself in the World**

At KS4 we remain committed to a broad and balanced but challenging curriculum.

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. Year 9 students have opportunities to talk through their choices with their Student Progress Tutors. Further advice comes from assemblies, designated sessions and during the Y9 Parents' Evening.

The GCSE examinations are completed at the end of Year 11 and include a core of:

- 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<sup>1</sup>;
- Options subjects are listed below. We expect all students to choose at least one EBACC subject with most students choosing two or three.  
Art, Computer Science, Food Preparation and Nutrition, French, Spanish, Geography, History, Physical Education, Psychology<sup>2</sup>, Design & Technology, and Music.  
Most students achieve 10 full GCSE qualifications currently. In addition, students follow non-examination courses in Character and Culture and PE.

### **Key Stage 5 – My Place in the World**

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<sup>1</sup> Religious Studies is an early entry GCSE that will be taken at the end of Year 10 by our students. From 2025 Religious Studies will cease to be compulsory and students will have the option to study it at GCSE.

<sup>2</sup> From 2025 Psychology will no longer be offered at GCSE.

In the Sixth Form students choose from a wide variety of A Levels. These courses are Art (including Craft, Design and Photography), Biology, Business Studies, Chemistry, Computer Science, Design and Technology, Economics, English Language, English Literature, French, Further Mathematics, Government and Politics, History, Mathematics, Media Studies, Music, PE, Physics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology, Spanish. AS Level Core Maths is also offered.

Students also have the opportunity to study Electives alongside their examined A-Levels.

The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is also offered for students who wish to research in an area of their choice, and to demonstrate proficient rhetoric as they present their evaluations and findings.

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.

Ambit

Our [Ambit](#) programme gives students the chance to spread their wings. The programme gives students the opportunity to engage with an exciting range of events, trips, and activities to help students develop leadership skills, discover new interests and form a new perspectives on the world.

## **HOMEWORK**

### **Why is it important?**

Homework is important for a variety of reasons, which all contribute to achieving the school's aims, including:

- encouraging students to develop the self-discipline, confidence and motivation needed to study effectively on their own;
- improving their resourcefulness, responsibility, resilience and reflection;
- developing their capacity for lifelong learning and adaptability;
- consolidating and reinforcing knowledge, skills and understanding developed at school;
- encouraging retrieval practice which strengthens retention;
- extending school learning, for example through research and additional reading;
- building students' "Cultural Capital" and understanding of the wider world;
- providing feedback to the student and teacher of the student's knowledge, skills and understanding;
- sustaining the involvement of parents and carers in the management of students' learning.

Homework presents opportunities for students to develop and consolidate their competence as independent learners. The effectiveness of homework depends on its quality. Teachers at NHGS are required to set high quality homework which:

- has clear curricular objectives
- encourages the development of independent learning
- provides opportunities to practise, consolidate and retrieve learning

The purpose of all homework tasks will be clearly communicated with students.

### **Homework and the Student Planner**

Students in KS3 and 4 must record details of homework set in the Planner; this enables the Student Progress Tutors, Pastoral Staff and parents to check that the work given has been completed and the Planner is being used correctly. Teachers should be explicit with students about homework expectations, ensuring they record the task and deadline date clearly in their Planners. Teachers should ensure sufficient time is dedicated in lessons for the recording of homework. Setting it at the start or mid-point of the lesson is considered good practice, rather than the end.

Parents and carers are asked to support their child by monitoring the Student Planner regularly and by communicating with school in case of difficulty, contacting the subject teacher or Student Progress tutor in the first instance via a note in the planner or email.

In KS5 homework tasks will be set as assignments on the Google classroom with brief instructions.

### **Quality of Homework**

The quality of homework is monitored by Heads of Department, Pastoral Leaders and the Leadership Group through work scrutiny, during lesson observations and through student voice activities.

### **How much homework should be set?**

Homework should only be set if it adds value to student learning. The time required for the homework will depend on the particular task. At secondary level, studies indicate there is an optimum of between one and two hours (at KS3 and 4) per school day (longer for older students in the Sixth Form when study periods should be utilised), 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). Extended tasks such as projects may need a number of homework sessions over several weeks. Deadlines will be made clear and work will be monitored over that period.

## **How long do students have to complete homework?**

Students should have at least 48 hours to complete homework tasks. KS3 & 4 students will be directed to record all homework including deadlines in their Student Planner. It may also be posted on the Google Classroom. Students should usually expect feedback on homework which leads into the next sequence of learning. This can be in the form of teacher feedback, peer or self-assessment including whole class feedback. If homework is a longer project; feedback may understandably take longer than one week. High quality feedback is crucial in securing future compliance with homework.

High-quality homework should be acknowledged through the awarding of achievement comments. Homework should be referred to in the next most appropriate lesson so students are aware of how it fits into the bigger picture.

## **What happens if homework is incomplete?**

If a student doesn't complete homework without good reason, it is the expectation that this homework be completed for the next lesson or handed into the teacher beforehand. Students will be offered a 'catch up' session to ensure they don't fall behind with their learning. If they fail to attend this they will be issued with a behaviour comment and a subject detention.

## **Independent Study**

In addition to homework set by subject teachers, students are expected to work independently outside of the classroom. Students should be taking the time at home to review previous learning in all of their subjects on at least a weekly basis. This ensures students are committing knowledge to their long-term memory. For example, a student might revisit topics completed earlier in the year by reading back over their notes, creating flashcards drawing diagrams, memorising information using Knowledge Organisers, self-quizzing or completing some practice questions on the topic. Students are supported with independent study techniques through Revision Revolution resources (appendix 1). Students are responsible for initiating this independent reviewing of previous learning themselves - subject teachers will not direct them in exactly what to do, only remind them periodically that they should be reviewing prior learning. This independent reviewing of previous learning is a vital skill to develop ahead of GCSE and A level studies.

Periodically throughout the year students will sit summative assessments. These assessments enable the student, the subject teacher and parents to see what the student is already able to do and to identify areas for development and set improvement (SMART) targets. In addition, they enable the student to practise revising akin to GCSE and A level exam revision needed later on in their school career. The timings of these assessments are outlined in the school's assessment calendar ([available on the website](#)). Prior to these assessments subject teachers will ensure students know what will be assessed and will set the students revision as homework. Students should then use appropriate revision strategies to prepare thoroughly for the assessments. The expectation is that students will complete an appropriate amount of revision for each assessment to allow them to give of their best.

## **Use of IT with homework**

The use of IT is encouraged, but parents and students should not be disadvantaged if access at home is non-existent or limited. Please contact school if IT is a limiting factor in the completion of homework. Computers can be accessed at school in the IT room and in the Library at lunchtimes and after school. Teachers are encouraged to use Google Classroom to remind students of homework tasks and provide further resources and support materials for revision e.g. videos and podcasts. Teachers can schedule posts on the Google Classroom to ensure students are aware of homework activities

## **Homework during examination periods**

During exams season, the giving of regular homework should be carefully considered. Homework should not be set on content not relating to the upcoming assessment. It is recommended that in the 3 weeks leading up to internal exams and mocks and in the 5 weeks leading up to external exams, structured revision should be set to allow students to ready themselves for those upcoming examinations. Teachers should use their discretion and knowledge of the students to make appropriate demands at this time.

### NHGS Revision Revolution

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The following strategies have been identified through Educational research to have an impact on helping students to commit knowledge successfully to long term memory.

#### Effective Strategies:

##### 1. Spaced Repetition and Retrieval

Students should start planning early for exams and set aside a little bit of time every day, for example, five hours spread out over two weeks rather than the same five hours all at once. This is spaced practice and it is regarded as one of the most effective revision strategies.

Students should also divide up their revision into short manageable chunks of time - aiming for 20 - 30 minutes per session. 'Cramming' the night before is ineffective, unhealthy and is unnecessarily stressful and should be avoided.

Retrieval involves students leaving a certain amount of time before they recall knowledge they have already learned. It is allowing themselves time to forget before they retrieve it: each time they forget and then retrieve, it makes the pathway stronger and is retained in their long – term memory.

In 2009, research was undertaken and two groups of students were involved. The first had four sessions of learning then did an assessment on the fifth. The second, had two sessions with quizzing at the end of each one and their assessment on the third session. The second group remembered 30% more knowledge than the first. This is the power of spaced retrieval.

##### 2. Deliberate Practice

This involves answering questions to test your subject knowledge in a specific area. Questions can be self generated, from a textbook, from a Knowledge Organiser, from a website or asked by a partner. It is good to focus on a particular topic and answer around five to ten questions per exercise. It is important that students keep the questions whenever they get any incorrect and then revisit these at a later date in order to make sure that they gain mastery of the knowledge.

This strategy encourages students to focus upon their areas of weakness and spend time turning them into strengths. It can also involve deliberate practice of examination papers and timed practice. It is also a powerful strategy, but not in isolation.

##### 3. Interleaving

This is a process where you mix and combine multiple subjects and topics while you study in order to improve your learning. Blocked practice on the other hand, involves studying one topic very thoroughly before moving to another.

Interleaving has been shown to be more effective than blocked practice leading to better long-term retention.

##### 4. Low Stakes 'Testing'

Learn, quiz, learn, quiz, learn, quiz and repeat.

#### Effective ways to Quiz

1. The method below can be used in many ways: using revision guides, text or exercise books, Knowledge Organisers and even flashcards. There are five steps:
  - a. Look and Learn / Revise (by speaking aloud or writing down);
  - b. Cover it up;
  - c. Write it down / or say it (as you are 50% more likely to remember it if you do);
  - d. Check your revision and correct it (without worrying about failing);
  - e. Then retest a few days / weeks / month later so it is spaced retrieval.

This method can also incorporate dual – coding, which includes combining verbal materials with visual materials. There are many ways to visually represent material, such as with infographics, timelines, cartoon strips, diagrams, and graphic organisers.

## 2. Flashcards

60% of students enjoy revising by using flashcards, but what is the most effective ways to use them?

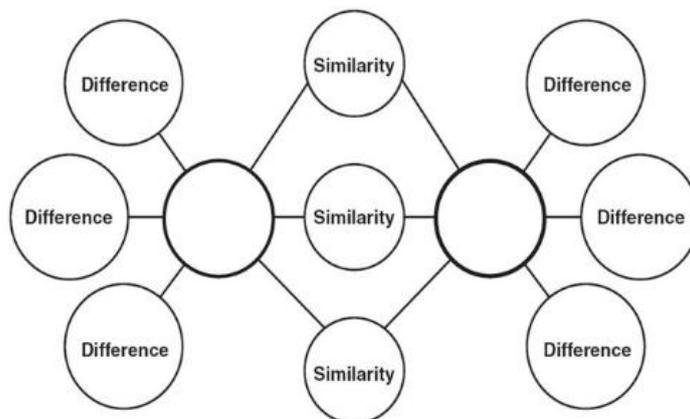
<https://examstudyexpert.com/leitner-system/>

## 3. The Frayer Model

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIPLCYw4ckE>

## 4. Double Bubbles

This allows students to compare and contrast ideas, events and even poems.



## 5. Multi – Flow Maps

Although this video exemplifies using Geography, it can be applied to any subject:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3t8ouJ-NluE>

## 6. Brain Dumping

This is a popular one to be used at the end of a topic and involves writing down everything that can be remembered so often a blank piece of paper is usually used to 'brain dump' the retrieved knowledge.

7. GCSE pod is known as the netflix of GCSE content - an online platform which allows students (Y7-11) to stream or download short revision style videos to help support learning. They can watch pods via their devices at anytime; whilst on their journey to or from school is a great time.

- It uses dual coding of sight and sound to help learning to be more memorable
- There are pods available for almost all subjects and they are exam board specific so students are assured of watching the right content to help with exam preparation.
- Data shows students can achieve one grade higher using GCSEpod on a regular basis.
- Students use their NHGS email as the username then create their own password. Go to [gcsepod.com](https://gcsepod.com) and click "log in".