

The Curriculum

Year 7

When pupils join the school they are placed in a Form or Tutor Group, which will stay together for the five years of compulsory secondary education. This group of about 28 pupils will place them with their friends from primary school, and their Tutor will ensure not only their settling successfully into the school but also that their academic progress is going well.

For most lessons, pupils are taught in groups independent of their Tutor Groups. These groups are assigned a letter: N, E, L, S, T, H, M, W and G - from the name of our school and town. Pupils will stay in these groups for English, Science, French, Geography, History and RE.

Seven of these groups are parallel, of about 29 pupils, but do not contain the full range of ability. The other two groups provide specific help for pupils with difficulties in learning: one is a small group of pupils and addresses their particular problems in learning, and the other is a group of 18-20 pupils who have not found schooling easy at the primary stage and who are on a fast track programme to make compensatory progress. (The aim is for these pupils to catch up by the start of Year 8.)

In Mathematics and ICT, pupils start off in their normal teaching group but, at half-term in the Autumn Term, some degree of setting by ability is introduced. For their other lessons Year 7 pupils are taught in groups of approximately 20 for the practical subjects: Art, Design and Technology, Physical Education and Music. Pupils are familiarised with the use of the school library and its CD-ROM equipment.

Setting in Years 8 and 9

There is a deliberate design to the groupings in Year 7, and this becomes more formal in Years 8 and 9. Setting in Mathematics, ICT, English, Science, French, Geography, History and RE allows groups to follow the right work at the right pace. The number of groups in each year gives us the flexibility to match the curriculum's demands with each pupil's strengths and needs. Some pupils are given the chance to study Spanish as an additional language.

Learning Support for pupils with Special Needs

We have a clear policy here: all pupils are to be helped to be successful in their learning. We are no less ambitious for pupils with special needs in education, and if the difficulties lie with reading, or numeracy, or spelling, or handwriting, then we seek to put them right. Grouping pupils appropriately from Year 7 is important, and we are justly proud of the success of the Paired Reading scheme and the gains in reading that children have made through it. We aim to make a difference to these pupils' learning.

Years 10 and 11

These are the GCSE years, also known as Key Stage 4. All students have a timetable which includes core subjects and their option choices.

Core Subjects

English	Mathematics	Science
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Most students take English Literature as well as English Language. In Science, the most able take Physics, Chemistry and Biology as separate subjects, the majority follow the double Science course, and the others take single Science.

Other Compulsory Subjects

PE	PSHRE
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These give students a breadth of experiences in addition to their GCSE courses. PE and PSHRE are compulsory for all pupils. PSHRE includes aspects of Citizenship.

Optional Subjects

Pupils choose one of three possible routes:

ROUTE 1

This is the “English Baccalaureate (EBacc)” Route. The EBacc is a term that describes the following group of 6 GCSE¹ subjects: English, Maths, 2 Sciences, a Humanity subject and a Language. To qualify for the EBacc, pupils must gain at least grade 5 in English (either Language or Literature) and Maths, and grades A*-C in the other subjects. Pupils opting for Route 1 must...

- choose a Humanity (either History or Geography)
- and a Language (either French or Spanish). Spanish can only be chosen if you have studied it in Year 9.
- then choose 2 additional subjects from the list of optional subjects.

Because the EBacc is the established academic “gold standard”, the majority of pupils are encouraged to follow Route 1, particularly if they are expected to gain grades 5-9 or A*-C in the 6 EBacc subjects.

ROUTE 2

This Route is for those pupils who find languages or humanities (Geography/History) particularly difficult and who are unlikely to achieve grades 5-9/A*-C in the 6 EBacc subjects but either want to study all GCSEs, or one BTEC course that is an alternative to GCSEs. Here pupils must choose 4 subjects from the list of optional subjects.

ROUTE 3

This Route is designed for those pupils who are less likely to achieve high grades in traditional GCSEs. The courses available are more vocational, with a focus on practical work and skills development. There are BTEC courses, Entry Level Pathway (ELP) and the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE). Here pupils must choose 1 double BTEC course and then 3 other subjects from the list of optional subjects.

A few students will be following individually-tailored programmes of study and activities. These may include work experience placements, practical activities in school, as well as studying basic subjects.

Optional subjects

These are available as GCSEs (unless indicated otherwise):

Art, Business Studies, Certificate of Personal Effectiveness, Child Care, Drama, Economics, Electronics, Engineering, BTEC Engineering, Environment & Land-based Science, Food, French, Geography, History, Geography & History Entry Level Certificate, Music, Religious Studies, Resistant Materials, Physical Education, Spanish, BTEC Sport, Textiles, BTEC Travel & Tourism and BTEC Workskills.

In offering this broad range of subjects, every attempt is made to accommodate the individual’s own choices, and groups are organised so that the work is aimed at a level and pace right for the group.

Almost all students follow GCSE courses, unless it is appropriate for them not to.

PSHE and Citizenship in Years 7 to 11

Citizenship is a compulsory part of the curriculum. The programme of study is largely covered by pupils’ studies in other subjects, but also by discussions and activities within registration time and planned “off-timetable” sessions.

Cognitive Ability Tests

At an early stage in Year 7 your child will sit a series of short tests. These tests are designed to measure their ability to reason. Within the test there are three subjects: verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning and spatial/non-verbal reasoning.

The results of each pupil’s work will provide invaluable information, which we will use to assess whether we are getting the most out of your child in his/her classes. Where there appears to be a difference in Cognitive Abilities Test result and grades on reports etc., we investigate to determine the reason for this. The tests also offer us further information by which we can diagnose the cause of difficulties in learning. This diagnosis helps us to correct any misunderstanding in particular areas.

¹ GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. There are 8 different pass grades: Higher grade passes: A*, A, B, C; Lower grade passes: D, E, F, G. This will change for new GCSE courses introduced for first teaching in September 2015 to a scale of 1 to 9, where 9 is the highest grade.

We aim to maximise each pupil's progress and the results of these tests offer one yardstick by which we measure potential and diagnose specific areas of weakness

Homework

This is an essential part of every pupil's learning process and complements the work done in school. Parents are asked to co-operate and give their support so that full value may be gained from this opportunity for independent study.

Each evening two or three subjects are set, following a published timetable. In Year 7 homework should take about an hour in total; further up the school it may take rather longer. Sometimes pupils are set a task to be completed over an extended period of time. Individual projects, requiring planning, research and production are important parts of several subjects. "Learning" homework is just as important as "written" homework and should not be rushed.

Each pupil is provided with a student planner in which homework, grades and targets should be carefully recorded. The planner also contains space for the pupils to record their attendance and write reminders (e.g. the need to bring in kit or equipment), and for parents to communicate with staff (and vice versa).

The school would appreciate parents' help in:

1. checking that homework is done
2. providing suitable conditions - a quiet, warm room free from background noises from radio and TV is desirable - and encouraging children to do homework before other evening activities are embarked upon
3. showing interest in the work being done – a little encouragement goes a long way!
4. letting the child's Form Teacher or Head of Year know if homework seems excessive or alternatively rather sparse. Please also inform us if homework is causing distress or anxiety. Should a child repeatedly claim that he/she has no homework please check with us since it may be that he/she has unwisely rushed through the work at lunchtime or on the journey home.
5. writing a short note to the Form Teacher if a child is unable to do the homework set on a particular occasion because of illness or other emergency

'Gifted and talented' students

A strength of our school is its truly comprehensive nature. We seek to provide the very best service for all our pupils, including the most able. Teachers quickly identify the most able in their subject and we aim to push those pupils every day, in every lesson. Pupils are given the independence to think critically; older year groups are often taught using undergraduate-style one-to-one tutorials and seminars which prepare them for university. Teachers take part in informal observations of the teaching of the most able pupils; we also enjoy using the L5 observation room to share teaching techniques.

We promote a remorselessly intellectual and academic culture which challenges and deepens our pupils' thinking. The following is a snapshot of what we do. The English and Science departments produce advanced reading lists which encourage top pupils to read widely. Our most able scientists take part in the Ogden Physics Awards; top Mathematicians compete in the UKMT Maths Challenge; able linguists plan and deliver Geography and Science lessons in French or Spanish; historians are encouraged to compete in national essay competitions and also have the chance to visit local archives. Numerous societies and competitions encourage independent thinking: the Debating Society, the Youth Speaks Rotary Competition, the Magistrate's Court Mock Trial Competition, pre-election political talks and the Advanced Discussion Group are just a few examples. We aim to widen pupils' horizons by inviting external speakers, including speakers from Robert Peston's prestigious 'Speakers for Schools' programme. This year academics from Lancaster University Philosophy Department introduced our most able RE pupils to the philosophy of life, death and the soul. Able pupils are encouraged to aim high. Prospective Oxbridge candidates in Year 12 began the year with a talk by a visitor from Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, who introduced students to Oxbridge subject choices (including some of the less familiar ones) as well as to the application and interview process.

Many students successfully applied for courses and summer schools which prepare them for the transition to a top university – these include the Sutton Trust summer schools, the Durham Supported Progression Scheme, Diamond Light Source and UNIQ courses at Oxford. We take students on visits to Oxford and Cambridge to meet current students and academics, while in school, the Year 12 Advanced Discussion group, where subject specialists chair a wide range of discussions, helps prepare students for the challenge of entrance interviews.

University Successes

This year Emily Ostridge was successful in gaining her place at Keble College, Oxford, to read Law, and Lucy Thompson was successful in gaining her place at Wadham College, Oxford, to read Physics. There are now 8 old Wigtonians at Oxford University and 2 at Cambridge. On average we send about 4 or 5 students to Oxbridge every

year and in all, about 90 students take up places at university elsewhere, with many gaining places in competitive courses at prestigious institutions.

This year six of our recent students graduated from Cambridge and Oxford University: Peter Blenkarn gained his degree in Engineering from St John's College, Oxford, Christopher Connell gained his degree in Law from St Peter's College, Oxford, Thomas Mattinson gained his degree in Maths and Computer Science from Merton College, Oxford, William Murrant gained his degree in Engineering from Lincoln College, Oxford, Kathryn Poole gained her degree in Maths from Hertford College, Oxford, and Charlotte Wise gained her degree in PPE from Hertford College, Oxford.

Religious Education

Religious Education in school includes acts of collective worship, weekly lessons of class teaching, and the values and standards which inspire the whole life of the school community. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from assemblies and lessons on grounds of conscience and applications in writing to the Head will be sympathetically considered. There are assemblies in all sections of the School. The basic values are broadly Christian, but ideas from other religions and cultures are used. Music from the past and present is included and pupil participation is encouraged. Special occasions are the annual Founders' Day Service, and Carol Services, which are held in St Mary's Parish Church, and the Remembrance Service.

The Sixth Form

The Sixth Form plays a vital role in our school. It offers a vibrant and proven educational opportunity for the young adults of this community. It constitutes a major reason why we are able to attract such a highly qualified teaching staff. Sixth-Form lessons are the place where teachers can practise their academic trade at a high level. It also enriches the life of the school in many other ways. All our Sixth-Formers are prefects; many give up their free time to help with pupils with special needs; some of them assist teachers in other lower school lessons. Through all these, and through contributions to school sport, to dramatic and musical productions, through the school newsletter, and many other channels, our Sixth-Formers provide leadership and help to raise expectations and standards. We would be a much poorer place without them.

In return, we offer to our Sixth-Formers the assurance of individual attention from informed and concerned adults, together with the firm guidance which is appropriate for an institution which sees itself still being – to a degree – in loco parentis. The possibility of lonely anonymity does not exist in our Sixth Form.

Sixth-Form Study Programme:

A Levels

These are two-year courses consisting, in the main, of 4 units of work, with most work assessed at the end of the second year. They are demanding but highly valued qualifications, well understood by employers and all higher education institutions. An A*, A or B grade at GCSE in a subject is an indicator of likely success at A level, but A Levels can differ in both method of study and form of examination. Indeed, some A Levels are more traditional and harder than others. NTS staff are well placed to advise pupils.

We have a broad programme of A-Level subjects, but this may be subject to change:

Applied Science, Art, Biology, Business Studies, Chemistry, Computing, Economics, English Literature, English Language, French, Further Mathematics, Geography, Health and Social Care, History, Information Technology, Leisure Studies, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Physics, Product Design, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology, Spanish, Textiles.

AS Levels

From September 2015, AS Levels become a standalone qualification that no longer contributes to the full A Level. It is likely that we will be able to offer some AS qualifications within the range of subjects given above, especially where the AS course can be delivered simultaneously with the first year of the full A Level.

Applied GCE

Applied GCEs remain available for teaching until September 2017 and are vocationally based A-Level Qualifications. They are a good broad introduction to an occupational area and will allow easy access into employment, further vocational study or Higher Education. They involve lots of new ways to study: work placement, group projects and such like. A Single Applied GCE is a two-year course and equivalent to 1 A Level. Currently, we offer Applied GCEs in Health and Social Care, Science, and Leisure Studies.

We also offer GCSE resit examinations in English and Mathematics for students needing them, and the opportunity to study Latin.

As well as your chosen subjects at whatever level, students will undertake a programme of curriculum enrichment in the Lower Sixth, which may include, if appropriate, a project of their own choosing, and in the Upper Sixth they will study General Studies A Level. Various activities will be offered, such as Advanced Discussion Group, and a variety of team and individual sports.

Sixth-Form Enrichment

Year 12 Curriculum Enrichment Day

This year, Year 12 students spent Curriculum Enrichment Day exploring options post-Sixth Form. The day began with a presentation from two representatives from Newcastle University (part of the school's 'Partner Programme') where students learnt about the UCAS process, student life and completed a celebrity UCAS personal statement game. In the afternoon, 10 visiting speakers from a range of local businesses and training providers delivered seminars to our students. These included presentations from Innovia, Sellafield, Cartmell Shepherd (Law), National Nuclear Laboratory (NNL), Primary Teaching, Healthcare Professions, Gen 2 and The Cumberland News plus a number of ex-students delivering seminars on 'taking a GAP year' and 'studying at Lancaster University'.

The day ended with a presentation from the University of Cumbria covering interview skills and student finance. As part of our partnerships with Newcastle University and University of Cumbria our students enjoy perks such as guaranteed offers (subject to certain criteria), fully funded summer schools and guaranteed interviews (for specific courses).

The talks were designed to get students thinking about options post-A Level / university and consider careers they perhaps had not previously considered. Students also attended the UCAS Higher Education convention at the Sands Centre on Friday 3rd July where they were able to talk to representatives from universities, the armed forces and training providers. A Parents' Information Evening was also held on Thursday 9th July.

Sixth-Form Charity Challenge Week

For the last five years, Sixth-Form students have participated in the annual Charity Challenge week; this takes place in March to coincide with Comic Relief / Sport Relief. Sixth-Formers are set the challenge of working in their Tutor Groups to raise as much money as they can over the week with the winner receiving the coveted Sixth-Form Charity Cup. This year, the Sixth Form threw themselves wholeheartedly into the challenge and raised an unprecedented £2825.19, bringing the total raised over the last 5 years to well over £10,000! This year, the money was split equally between Comic Relief and the Inglewood residential care home fund for an automatic patient-turning mattress.

During the week, students came up with a variety of activities including the time-honoured bake sale, a Mario Kart challenge, an American-style diner, a pancake sale, a photo booth and a Year 12 vs Year 13 charity rugby match. Year 13 were the undisputed victors of the rugby match and were consequently the recipients of the Tercentenary Charity Shield. An undoubted highlight of the week was a well-supported 1 mile run around the school field. The week culminated with the Sixth-Form Common Room being open to all members of the school on Friday lunchtime where Tutor Groups had set up stalls with games to play and cakes and German waffles on sale. This gave lower school pupils a glimpse into what it is to be a part of our Sixth Form.

Christmas Shoe Box Appeal

This year's shoe box appeal attracted an enthusiastic and proactive group of Lower Sixth female volunteers who rose to the challenge. Under the direction of Lucy Hinks and Hayley Walker, the team publicised and launched the appeal soon after we returned to school.

Our overall total this year was a fantastic 256 shoe boxes; a total that again got our school an individual mention in the Keswick Reminder as the best in the region. Each shoe box also required £3 to cover costs. Therefore, a host of fundraising activities took place to raise the £768 required. Our Poppy appeal donations reached £400 meaning over £1100 has been raised for these two charity efforts alone.

Further Curriculum Information

Parents are welcome to seek further information about the detailed curriculum taught in each subject area. An approach can be made to the Head of Year or the Curriculum Deputy. Parents may also see copies of statutory instruments, DfE circulars, OFSTED reports and our schemes of work by contacting the school office. Much of this is also available on our website.