

Curriculum Overview

Blundell's provides a broad curriculum experience which allows pupils the opportunity to have progressively more challenging linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, aesthetic, creative, physical, human and social educational experiences, and to build positively on their learning in those areas within a supportive environment.

We offer a varied and balanced academic curriculum, with 20 subjects available at GCSE and 26 subjects in the Sixth form, whilst offering additional opportunities for students to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, drawing on the expertise and support of a dedicated, enthusiastic and well-qualified staff.

At the heart of our approach is a strong commitment to optimising teacher to pupil ratios, and catering afresh for the academic preferences of pupils each year with timetable block flexibility at GCSE and A level whenever possible is. Class sizes are therefore only occasionally ever greater than 20, and may be less than 5 for some A level subjects. More typically, classes are between 14-20 until Year 11, and then 10-14 in the Sixth Form although these will vary each year. We strongly believe that enabling more senior pupils to access the academic subjects which most closely match their interests, aptitudes and aspirations helps them to reach their full potential with enthusiasm and confidence, something which we work closely with the Careers Department to deliver.

Annual Parents' meetings for each year group allow parents the chance to meet all the pupils' teachers in person. Each of these is preceded by an Academic Parents' Forum which is led by the Director of Studies, covering detailed information relevant to that year group and looking ahead to the next stage. The Head of the Junior Department and the Head of Careers will also participate in these forums, and communication is encouraged at any other time if there are any concerns or queries. Parents receive full termly feedback on academic progress and personal development via reports and tutor letters, with an additional two sets of Mark Orders each term giving briefer updates on effort and attainment levels.

Enrichment

We are committed to ensuring that opportunities to learn outside the classroom are available every year to each pupil as they progress through the School. We have a Field Day each term when all pupils are invited to participate in trips, outings, visits and workshops. We are fortunate to be in a geographical location which allows easy access to some outstanding facilities such as the Eden Project, Dartmoor, Exmoor, Haldon Forest, Broomhill Sculpture Park, Woolacombe Bay, Dunster Castle, Cheddar Gorge, Longleat, Escot Park, @Bristol, Paignton Zoo and the Blackdown Hills amongst others.

An imaginative programme of enrichment events for whole year groups hosted closer to home includes a Film School project, a Crime Squad Investigation Day, a Global Citizenship and Enterprise Day, and a Business Challenge. Every weekend during full term, different groups of pupils will have outings arranged (in addition to a full sports fixtures programme) which have included coasteering, paintballing, quad biking, cinema visits, Ten Tors training, Duke of Edinburgh expedition practice. Participation in these is voluntary and we are delighted that so many pupils take up these opportunities, bringing a real sense of community to the school throughout the weekend as well as the working week.

We are involved with the local community in many different ways, ranging from volunteering (visits to residential care homes; work with primary age pupils) to support of charities through local fundraising events such as joint Art exhibitions and musical concerts; and hosting lectures (annually

the Royal Geographical Society), dramatic productions (Garden Opera), and local clubs such as the Tiverton Astronomy Society, from which our parents, staff and pupils also benefit.

Gifted & Talented

In addition to the academic and enrichment educational opportunities from which all pupils benefit, we have a register of pupils who are academically gifted and/or talented in areas such as Music, Drama, Sport and Art or Design. Some of these pupils may hold a scholarship or Award, but this is not a pre-requisite for accessing this programme. These pupils have a 'mentor' in addition to their academic tutor, who co-ordinates their annual programme and will meet with each individual during the year to discuss progress, goals and aspirations.

For those wishing to apply for Oxbridge, medicine, dentistry or veterinary science we have an enhanced programme of specific interview preparation, guidance and advice, and pupils wishing to undertake an Extended Project in the Sixth Form may do so with support from the Gifted & Talented Co-ordinator. There are opportunities for senior pupils to run Academic Societies; participate in competitions arranged by the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Bank of England, Maths Olympiads, Arkwright Scholarships, Saatchi Gallery; and masterclasses in, stone-carving, willow sculpture, Royal Academy Life Drawing, Dartington Hall Music, visiting composers and writers.

A new initiative is an annual Sixth form scholars' dinner, which will provide the opportunity for this group of pupils to meet together for a social event with a guest speaker.

Personal Development

The Futures programme (Years 11-13) builds on the foundations of the PSHCE programme (Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education; Years 7-10) in supporting and reflecting the aims and ethos of the school, giving pupils both '*roots and wings*'.

The PSHCE programme has protected time each week and is taught by experienced staff. Girls and boys are taught separately in Years 7-9 and for specific topics thereafter, otherwise in co-educational groups during Years 10-13. Topics include e-safety; bullying & cyber-bullying; children and the law; nutrition and healthy eating; self-esteem & assertiveness; time management; puberty & adolescence; divided families; peer pressure; sexual health; alcohol and drug use/abuse; discrimination; the work of the police; UK and European government; rights & responsibilities; political participation; human rights; personal budgeting; mass media; global issues (water wars, famine, organic & GM crops, population growth, women's rights, AIDS/HIV). Visiting specialists are regular participants in the programme at all ages and are well received by pupils, particularly on topics such as sexual health, safe driving, drugs and alcohol.

There is a dedicated team of Futures teachers seeing the Sixth form weekly in small groups for advice and guidance on Careers, GAP years and finance. The Lower Sixth programme makes an early start on familiarising pupils with the UCAS process and website (University & College Admissions System) which most will use to apply for places at Higher Education Institutions. Many pupils return for advice as Old Blundellians (for example if they are making an application in a GAP year) and we are happy to provide time and expertise to support them.

A varied programme of sport and activities is provided after lessons, with many opportunities to develop physical, mental, aesthetic, creative and problem-solving skills. Chapel Choir, Chamber Choir, Big band, Orchestra and Soul Band are some of the larger musical ensembles, whilst annual House Plays and school plays or musicals provide a range of opportunities to perform, design and

direct. All major sports are coached, and a full fixtures programme allows for pupils with different levels of sporting ability to participate in matches. Blundellians have reached prominence at both County/Regional and National level in Rugby, Athletics, Cross Country, Hockey, Equestrian, Fives, Squash, and Target Rifle. The annual Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race is proud tradition, as is the historic inter-house Russell Cross-Country Cup and Open Competition which is a highlight of the Spring Term.

The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) is compulsory for three terms (Year 9/10) but many pupils opt to continue their involvement in working towards NCO rank promotion and developing a wide range of leadership and personal skills through adventurous training.

Supporting Learning

The work of the academic Departments is also supported by the TESOL Department (offering additional help for pupils whose first language is not English - usually around 10% pupils), and the Learning Support Department (including those with Specific Learning Needs such as dyslexia or dyspraxia). Sessions may be one-to-one or in small groups, determined by the needs of the pupil balanced with the appropriate expertise being available.

A very small number of pupils who will struggle to access the full curriculum successfully may follow a slightly reduced programme, determined in consultation with their families, the TESOL or Learning Support Dept, Houseparents and the Director of Studies. Close monitoring of the progress of such pupils can allow for adjustment at any point during an academic year. Should any pupils have a statement, their needs would be suitably accommodated. Close liaison between these Departments and the Exams Officers also caters for access arrangements in some internal exams as well as public exam situations, such as pupils requiring extra time or use of a laptop or scribe. These pupils are in the minority but their needs are carefully identified; we work with two independent Educational Psychologists in assessing the appropriate levels of need and where feasible, separate examination arrangements are put in place for extra time candidates in order to minimise the level of disruption experienced.

We also have a Maths for Science support programme in the Lower Sixth, allowing an additional period of teaching per week for pupils who have opted for one or more Science A level subjects but are not studying Maths in the Sixth form. This is a programme designed by the Head of Science to teach and consolidate the arithmetical techniques which are deployed within the science A level courses, so that pupils' attainment and progress can be maximised.

CURRICULUM IN YEARS 7, 8 AND 9

There are four academic teaching groups in each of years 7 & 8 to accommodate around 60 pupils, and five teaching groups in year 9 (for up to 90 pupils) setted to an extent by ability. We make minor adjustments each year if the academic profile and needs of the cohort dictate, but for 2009/2010 :

Year 7 setted separately for Maths, and otherwise in 2 parallel upper groups & 2 parallel lower groups. English entrance exam data used as main instrument for this form group setting.

Year 8 setted separately for English, French and Maths, with revised form group allocations based broadly on Science ability. Two upper parallel forms with one middle and one lower ability form.

Year 9 setted separately for English, French, second language (Spanish/German) and Maths. Year 8 end of year exam performance together with new pupil entrance /scholarship exam data used for setting.

The number of teaching periods allocated to each subject is given in the grid below.

- Each teaching period is 35 or 40 minutes long depending on the time of day
- Years 7 & 8 have lessons on Mon-Fri only; in Year 9 pupils have Sat morning school (which consists of 4 academic lessons)
- Lessons are over by 3.35pm most days and then a termly programme of activities and games is arranged for the time between lessons and the end of school at 5.30pm.
- In all three years, PSHCE is taught in boy/girl separate groups by a team of experienced PSHCE teachers. There is also academic Tutor contact time built in to the week as additional pastoral support, based around House time.
- In Years 7 & 8 all pupils do French and Latin (differentiated schemes of work for the latter cater for a greater emphasis on the Classical World for weaker students). In Year 9 they may choose German or Spanish as a new (second) Modern language, and may choose whether or not to continue with Latin.
- For pupils who choose to continue with Latin (usually between one quarter and one third of the year group), we have created a termly rotation of the Expressive Arts (Drama, Music, DT, Art) catering for their preferences. Pupils not studying Latin in Year 9 will do the periods as indicated below.
- For one set of pupils, generally those who receive TESOL or Learning Support, the study of the second language in Year 9 is at the level of a Basic Certificate course which only requires 2 periods a week rather than 4 periods. Their support lessons can be timetabled into one of the remaining periods so that they do not miss out on any core teaching elsewhere, and they have a lesson on World Studies/Independent Project developing their knowledge of current affairs and presentation skills.

SUBJECT	YEAR 7	YEAR 8	YEAR 9
English (speaking, reading, listening and writing skills are all developed)	4	4	4
Mathematics	5	5	4
Separate Sciences are taught throughout			
Biology	2	2	3
Physics	2	2	3
Chemistry	2	2	3
French (speaking, reading, listening and writing skills are all developed)	4	4	4
Latin (Classical Studies for lower form)	2	2	4 (or 2)
Art (photography and digital as well as drawing, painting and 3D skills)	2	2	2
Design & Technology (including Graphics and Computer Aided Design/Modelling)	2	2	2
Drama	2	2	2
Music (stronger musicians in Year 9 will	1	1	2 (or 1)

have the opportunity for an extra lesson)			
ICT - Information & Communications Technology (skills based courses)	1	1	1
World Studies/Independent Project	-	1	(1)
Geography	2	2	2
History	2	2	2
Physical Education (& timetabled Games)	2 (& 2)	2 (& 2)	1
Religious Studies	1	1	2
German	-	-	4] one
Spanish	-	-	4] only
PSHCE (Personal, Social, Health & Citizenship Education)	1	1	1
TOTAL number of periods per week	39	40	40

CURRICULUM FOR YEARS 10 & 11

In the Spring term of Year 9, students are asked what subjects they would like to choose at GCSE following guidance sessions with the Head of Careers within the PSHCE programme, consultation with parents at the annual Parents' meeting, an Academic Forum led by the Director of Studies and Head of Careers, and a morning's workshop with visiting professionals entitled '*What's My Line?*'. Parents and pupils are also directed to the *Launchpad* website (via the school's login) which is an excellent resource in helping to make decisions about future courses of study.

The teaching blocks are then constructed, based on these choices, to enable as many students as possible to study their chosen combination. For at least the past five years virtually every student has been able to study their chosen subjects.

All examined GCSE courses have 4 periods per week, except English (5 periods) and Maths (4 periods per week in Year 10 increasing to 5 per week in Year 11). Pupils are setted by ability in these subjects and if appropriate can move sets during the two years without negatively impacting on any other lessons. Pupils are also setted by ability for Modern Languages.

Pupils will generally sit 10 GCSEs from the 20 subjects available, comprised of the following:

English Language

English Literature

Mathematics

A minimum of two separate Sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics)

For the remaining five subjects we strongly recommend a Modern Language and most pupils study at least one, along with at least one Humanity (History, Geography, RS) from the options below. RS can also be studied as a short course GCSE (see explanatory notes below).

- ◆ Art
- ◆ Design & Technology (Resistant Materials OR Graphic Products courses available)
- ◆ ICT
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Drama
- ◆ French
- ◆ Spanish
- ◆ German
- ◆ Latin (Greek may also be taught and examined although some lessons may be off timetable)
- ◆ Geography
- ◆ History
- ◆ Religious Studies

In addition, pupils have a period of each of the following in Year 10:

PSHCE (Personal, Social, Health & Citizenship Education)

Religious Studies Short course GCSE or non-examined general RS
(for those opting for neither the RS full course nor short course)

General PE/private study rotation (programme maximizes access to sports facilities at different times of year) *

* Pupils needing TESOL or Learning Support lessons have their lessons scheduled here to ensure they do not miss any teaching time in the examined curriculum subjects.

SIXTH FORM STUDIES

We recommend that students choose 4 subjects to study at AS level and then to continue with 3 of these to A level (although it is possible to do more than this). The majority of subjects are timetabled for 8 periods each week but this may be reduced if there are only a small number of students wishing to study a particular subject. If numbers are exceptionally small, the option may not be viable but this is unusual.

Pupils choose their subjects in Spring of Year 11 and the timetable grid of blocks is devised to best suit the options selected and to allow the largest number of pupils the opportunity to study the combinations of subjects they have chosen.

Art (Fine)	Geography
Art (Photography)	German
Biology	Government & Politics (* new subject from Sept 2010)
Business Studies	Greek (* teaching will be available if demand is sufficient)
Chemistry	Latin
Classical Civilisations	Mathematics / Further Mathematics (guided choice)
Computing	Music
History	Music Technology
Design and Technology	Physics
Drama and Theatre Studies	PE
Economics	Psychology
English	Religious Studies (Ethics)
Film Studies	Spanish
French	

Preparation for the future

All pupils follow a Futures programme in their free 'block' (up to 2 periods per week on an annual programme). This comprises an introduction to UCAS and Careers advice, advice on interviews, Oxbridge entry and preparation and related topics. Pupils not wishing to go on to University are also guided and supported; destinations have included the Armed Forces, Foundation courses and direct employment. Pupils work with the same Futures teacher throughout the year in small groups with full ICT access, which allows for a very personal level of support, additional to the guidance received from their Academic Tutor, advice from the Head of Careers and the resources of the Careers Department.

There is also programme of PSHCE for Sixth form which includes presentations from visiting experts and agencies. These talks are generally scheduled into study periods or Futures periods without affecting teaching time.

Extension and Support

Pupils are invited to consider the option of undertaking an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) during their two years in the Sixth form, for which a mentor and supervisor will be arranged. Pupils and parents are briefed on this during the Lower Sixth; it is an independent research project carrying the equivalent UCAS tariff points as an AS level.

The Activities programme offers a chance to study Critical Thinking, participate in the Enterprise programme (via the Economics Society, Business Club, Young Enterprise scheme or Blundell's Young Co-operative), and contribute to the editorial team of the school magazines and publications.

Those capable of studying Further Maths will be setted in an accelerated class and will have additional periods of Maths (2 periods in L6 increasing to 6 periods in U6). Depending on their AS choices they may follow the core/mechanics route (eg for those doing Physics) or the core/statistics route (eg for those doing Economics) under advisement from the Head of Maths.

Any pupils opting for one or more Science AS levels without studying A level Maths (or having an A* in GCSE Maths) also receives an extra *Maths for Science* support lesson each week. This is a course overseen by the Head of Science which focuses on the mathematical techniques needed to support the successful study of advanced level science. Needs are reviewed at the end of the Lower Sixth.

Pupils for whom English is a Second Language receive Sixth Form teaching in small groups for the IELTS exam which is sat in April and will qualify them to enroll in UK Universities.