Dragon School Curriculum Policy

Reviewed and approved:	Deputy Head Academic
	March 2026
Next review due:	May 2027

Definitions and Applicability

In this Policy:

- "Pupils" means all currently registered Dragon School pupils
- "School" means the Dragon School, Oxford

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following School Policies:

- Dragon School Character and Health Education Policy
- Dragon School Careers Policy
- Dragon School English as an Additional Language Policy
- Dragon School Equal Opportunities Policy (Pupils)
- Dragon School Learning Support and Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Policy
- Dragon School Safeguarding Policy
- Dragon School Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development and British Values Policy

Summary

Our core academic aim is:

"To raise a generation of Dragons who are academically rigorous, creative, independent and ambitious free thinkers. To be a market leader in prep school education through curriculum design, professional development of teaching staff and partnerships."

The School provides a rich and progressive curriculum where all children are educated in all aspects of learning: linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, social and physical, aesthetic and creative. The curriculum goes above and beyond the National Curriculum and incorporates subjects such as Latin, Greek, Spanish, German and Reasoning.

All children will acquire skills in speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy.

The curriculum is tailored to suit the aptitudes of all children including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, including those who have an education health and care (EHC) plan.

Children are taught PSHEE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education), C&HE (Character & Health Education) & Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) within curriculum lessons. PSHEE, C&HE & RSE are also embedded in the pastoral care of all our children.

Aims of the Curriculum

"We have failed, unless we have helped the child develop his mind and his capacities in his own way, unless we have given him full scope for all the imagination and originality that is in him."

Skipper Lynam, Head of the Dragon 1886-1920

The School was founded on liberal principles and it offers a liberal education. It prides itself on offering a curriculum that 'develops the mind' and the full scope for 'all the imagination and originality'. The curriculum can only perform part of this function; the activities and enrichment programme complement in a significant way.

The School will:

- provide experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical aesthetic and creative education.
- ensure all children acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills.
- create a happy and secure learning environment where all children are valued.
- enable all children to learn and develop their skills to the best of their ability and to develop their potential.
- promote a positive attitude towards learning, so that children enjoy coming to school and acquire a solid basis for lifelong learning.
- help children develop lively, enquiring minds where they question rather than merely accept.
- help children acquire knowledge and understanding which will equip them for future challenges.
- help children obtain skills that they can transfer to other subjects or situations.
- enable children to be positive citizens in society, have respect for themselves and high self-esteem and be able to live and work cooperatively with others.
- help children understand the importance of truth and fairness, so that they grow up committed to equal opportunities for all.
- teach children to understand right from wrong.
- actively promote & uphold fundamental values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and inclusion of those with different faiths and beliefs.

The curriculum will:

- engage, motivate, challenge and sustain the interest of every child whatever their ability and build their confidence and self-esteem.
- offer a rich and progressive curriculum which is tailored to the needs of the children and to their future aspirations.
- ensure that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural values are recognised, addressed and developed.
- take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all children, including those children who have SEN and/or disabilities or an EHC plan.

The child will:

- develop an investigative, 'free-thinking' spirit, be able to work creatively and independently towards the solution of problems.
- be able to research, plan and structure ideas.
- be able to apply knowledge and draw conclusions.

- work with others and be respectful of their views.
- be able to present ideas orally to both their peer group and a wider audience.
- develop proficiency in all areas of the curriculum and in particular in speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy and Information and Communication Technology, to a level over and above the standard of children nationally.
- recognise that learning takes place outside the classroom as well as within.

Curriculum Values and Aims (EYFS-Year 3)

The Dragon Pre-Prep aims to provide a safe and exciting learning environment in which the children's personal and academic development can be nurtured. We aim to enable the children to become confident and curious learners who are motivated to find out more and have the freedom and willingness to embrace all the new experiences they will meet. A bespoke pastoral curriculum gives the children the skills to interact positively with those around them, respect the differences between members of the community and who can work well as a team. The curriculum is continually adapted to ensure that children can achieve the best possible outcomes in all areas of school life and are equipped to get the most out of the next stage of their education.

The Pre-Prep curriculum has as its basis the school's aims and values which are to inspire, encourage and develop free-thinking, confident young people who reach for the sun.

The Dragon has traditionally fostered informal and friendly relationships between staff and pupils which are underpinned by the school Values of Kindness, Courage and Respect; these permeate the daily life all members of the school. We promote healthy relationships with our parent body to support the children's learning and encourage them to participate in the school's community.

Aims in Action

We strive to support the children as they grow into independent and motivated learners who are prepared for the next stage of their development. To achieve this, our broad, balanced and creative curriculum is, age appropriate and thoroughly planned on a long- and medium-term basis in Year Group teams supported by lesson plans which look at the detail of learning. A theme for each half term ensures children are immersed in their learning and develop their curiosity make good progress in their Dragon learning journey. Extra-curricular activities, PSHEE lessons and assemblies complete the all-round Dragon experience.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage is distinct in its identity. The curriculum is holistic and ambitious and supports the development of all areas of learning. It is play-based in its approach, with a particular focus on developing language and extending vocabulary. It is planned in accordance with the 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2024' and communicated with our Dragon families via our Curriculum Map on a half termly basis.

Under the guiding theme of Learning and Development there are seven clear areas. The three prime areas are:

- Communication and Language.
- Physical Development.
- Personal, Social & Emotional Development.

These prime areas are strengthened and applied through four specific areas:

- Literacy.
- Mathematics.
- Understanding of the World.
- Expressive Arts and Design.

Years 1 - 3 Curriculum

The curriculum is organised and planned for using a thematic approach through which most subjects are taught. This is communicated with our Dragon families via our Curriculum Map on a half termly basis. This approach to teaching and learning is designed to support children's natural curiosity and stimulate their creativity. It offers children the opportunity to work in depth, giving them the time needed to reflect, consolidate and transfer their learning. There are strong links between subjects and children see their work as being connected, relevant and purposeful. The curriculum is creative, skills based, and knowledge supported, making learning motivational and successful. It is at this stage in a child's development that he/she begins to learn how to research independently and, where appropriate, we encourage each child to do so using a range of resources. The children are taught in mixed ability classes and lessons are adapted to meet learning needs to enable good progress across the curriculum. Children are supported further through small group intervention, extension groups and tailored 1-1 support from the Learning Support Team.

Year 4-8 Curriculum

The curriculum at the Prep builds on the foundations laid at the Pre-Prep and aims to strengthen a child's thinking skills, to develop independence and 'free-thinking' as learners. Heads of Department prepare schemes of work that plan for progression according to age and ability.

The transition from Year 3 to Year 4 is carefully managed and the knowledge of the curriculum on the two sites ensures that each child's needs are catered for.

In Year 4, only Maths is banded; all other teaching is in mixed ability groups. In Year 5, children are banded into Extension, Intermediate & Core groups for most subjects and are set separately for Maths. In Year 6, the bands are Extension/Intermediate/Core for Humanities subjects, but children are grouped individually for Science, Maths, French and Latin to allow greater flexibility for those with differing profiles. In the Upper Year (7&8), there are sets for all academic subjects. This enables adaptive teaching across different attainment groups, with high-achieving children covering GCSE+ work in preparation for their Scholarship Exams. The setting structure within the school is reviewed annually so changes are likely to be made year on year.

The curriculum is taught according to the specific strengths and weaknesses of each child, with every child being encouraged to 'reach for the sun'. When more specialist intervention is required, children are referred to the Learning Support, English as Additional Language and Speech and Language Therapy departments. Staff have access to all relevant information about a child's learning needs. There is a close partnership between teaching staff and the support departments, and advice and strategies are given to support differentiation.

The Dragon's 'Teaching Trilogy' of 'Culture', 'Curiosity' and 'Challenge' ensures a consistent

approach to teaching and learning across different teachers, classrooms and age-ranges and regular INSETs encourage professional development and collaboration amongst teaching colleagues.

Dragon Quest

Introduced in September 2020 for Years 4 and 5 only, Dragon *QUEST* offers a wide-ranging voluntary enrichment curriculum on Saturday mornings. All pupils across the Prep now have the opportunity to attend QUEST, and the participation remains very good:

Dragon *QUEST* is separated into five strands:

- **Q**uiet & Question
- **U**nderstand & Create
- **E**xploration & Adventure
- **S**kills & Society
- **T**rain & Play

Through participation in *QUEST*, children have the opportunity to develop, among other skills: logical thinking, physical fitness, creative acuity and cultural awareness.

Reaching for the sun

The Dragon, like most schools, caters for children with different educational needs, some of whom will be academically gifted in the conventional sense, others of whom will have special talents which do not always manifest themselves in expected ways.

In general, the school aims to provide an education which will be exciting, enriching, stimulating and fulfilling for all pupils, inspiring every pupil to 'reach for the sun'. We also recognise that additional support and extension of their curriculum by scaffolding tasks, success criteria, learning outcomes and opportunities to participate at a high level is needed. We aim to practise this both in and out of the classroom in a number of ways:

- Stretch and challenge in every classroom, embedded through the third 'theme' of our Teaching Trilogy: 'Challenge'.
- Provide opportunities to further their abilities outside school, particularly those with strengths in specific areas for example music, art, design, drama, dance or sport.
- To improve pupil outcomes in attainment, aspirations, motivation and self-esteem.
- To improve the quality of identification, teaching and support.
- Scaffolding and adaptations within task and/or outcome within the classroom, potential academic scholarship pupils being taught to at least GCSE standard and often beyond, and the less able being continually challenged by high expectations.
- Parent Forums on 'How to support your child's learning at home', 'Supporting your child's digital journey' and 'Growth Mindset'.
- Pre-term intensive tuition sessions for potential scholarship pupils.
- Extensive use of the *Promethean* facilities and the School's ICT suites, for timetabled lessons and also at other times.
- Explicit teaching of study skills, A.I. learning and thinking skills as part of 'Character & Health

Education'.

- The School Library contains over 14,000 volumes for children to choose from. Potential scholars complete their evening prep session in the Library to allow immediate access to reference books and information. The Librarians are extremely proficient at recommending suitable reading material for the children and frequently put together collections of books for class-based research projects. Pupils also have access to digital libraries through 'AccessIT' and 'Sora'.
- An extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, including: Additional Languages, specialist music ensembles, an art scholars' group offering increasingly independent learning, theatre visits (including plays performed in French and Greek), extension clubs / activities for Latin, Creative Writing, Science and Electronics Clubs, plus visiting lecturers, authors and poets, frequently international experts in their fields.
- A 'Performance Pathway' for potential Sports Scholars, run by the Sports Department.
- The *Spectrum+* programme, open to all pupils in Year 6-8, offering academic enrichment.
- Numerous opportunities for Drama: five major productions per year: one for Year 4, one for Year 5, both of these involving every child; one for Year 6 and two for Years 7 and 8; plus a pantomime and variety shows, Year 8 Revue, workshops, and Curtain Call for the most able performers in Year 8. A trip to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival took place in August 2024.
- Pupil participation in technical support (sound/lighting) for drama productions, working alongside members of staff.
- The *Spectrum* programme of Wednesday evening cultural events, which often involve the children directly in workshops, debates, practical activities in Art or Design; these are open to both day and boarding pupils, and to parents.
- The Summer Term 'Ignite' programme for Year 8, which pushes classroom teaching beyond CE or Scholarship, often has a significant inter- disciplinary element, and involves a weekly trip offsite.
- The opportunity to represent the School in a variety of sports at county, and sometimes national, level.
- Entry to competitions, including NANOWRIMO, Maths Olympiads, debating competitions, STEM Challenges.
- Music affords a particular outlet, with School Choir participation in public concerts, trips abroad involving concerts, and a programme of regular informal concerts at which children of all levels of ability can perform. Individual music tuition also enables pupils to aim high.
- Participation and performance in sport, both in major and minor sport is afforded at all levels, including national competitions, including IAPS.
- The Ambassador system encourages older pupils to feel responsible for younger children and to take responsibility for an area that interests them (e.g. Academic, Drama, Social Impact).
- Pupil responsibility for e.g. showing visitors round the Prep & Pre-Prep, helping with Open Mornings.
- Interview practice and preparation, as part of the Reasoning curriculum.

- The Dragon Award Scheme in Year 7-8.
- Academic mentors for potential Academic scholarship candidates. Mentors have an academic overview of each child and help to prepare them specifically for their school.
- One-to-one Learning Support sessions or study skills groups.

Roles and responsibilities

The Dragon Prep has two separate relevant posts to support the principle of 'challenge for all' and to support individual pupils who may excel in particular areas:

- *Head of Academic Scholarships.* Responsible for the identification of possible academic scholars (the organisation of co-curricular scholars (e.g. Sport/Art etc.) is led by the Assistant Head Co-curricular). Also tracking academic progress of scholarship candidates, organising school mentors and ensuring quality of curriculum provision, especially in Years 7/8. This role is supported by the Head of Teaching & Learning to include developing extended curriculum opportunities and stretch & challenge in lessons for all pupils.
- *Director of Clubs & Activities.* Responsible for running weekly *Spectrum* sessions, and *Spectrum+* meetings for boarders and Years 6-8 pupils respectively.

Assessment

Assessment must allow a range of time-scales within which a variety of outcomes can be achieved, not all of them quantifiable. Assessment data, derived from CATs and standardised Progress Tests Maths and English, allow us to measure 'value-added' achievement in key areas, and we collate examination statistics at CE and Scholarship level. Across the school, there are four key data points across the academic year, where progress and attainment across all pupils are monitored and reviewed carefully, in conjunction with the school's Head of Academic Data, Deputy Head (Academic) and Heads of Department. The success criteria for this progress and attainment does range beyond quantitative data. For example, we recognise the importance of monitoring pupils' Learning Habits and measure this through five different strands:

- **D**iligence
- **R**esilience
- **A**mbition
- **C**ollaboration
- **O**rganisation