



## WESTMINSTER UNDER SCHOOL

### Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Policy

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## **Introduction and Aims**

Westminster Under School is an extremely successful academic school that offers a broad education. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, discuss and debate in lessons and, through this, develop a real love of learning.

At Westminster Under School, pupils follow an enhanced academic curriculum which corresponds both to their needs and to senior school examination requirements. Lessons are taught by specialists who are passionate about their subjects and this provides our students with a confidence and gravitas that sets them apart in their post-13 schools.

The curriculum at Westminster Under School is an effective preparation for all of the opportunities and responsibilities that our pupils will encounter as part of a modern British society.

The aims of our curriculum are to:

- develop a vibrant learning environment in which both pupils and teachers are continually challenged and stimulated.
- encourage learning and knowledge for their own sake, and not be over-bound by exam requirements.
- be open-minded and enthusiastic in our teaching, to encourage our pupils to question and to assist them in forming and articulating their own ideas.
- build on the pupils' intellectual curiosity and stimulate an enjoyment of learning, analysis and scholarship.
- praise the pupils' efforts and progress wherever possible and to give constructive support.
- foster good working habits and an understanding of the importance of application, not least through our own prompt and detailed marking and comments.
- encourage a sense of collaboration, for example through team and group work as well as independent work.

Teaching staff at Westminster Under School are encouraged to reflect on their classroom practice and to maintain an interest in current research and trends in pedagogy.

## **Entry Points and Outline Curriculum**

### **Years 3 and 4**

Up to twenty-two pupils are selected following examination for entry into Year 3. Another twenty-two pupils are selected following examination for entry into Year 4.

In Years 3 and 4, pupils are taught the core curriculum, where possible, by their form teacher: English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography and PSHEE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education). There are specialist teachers for French, Music, Art, TPR, ICT, PE and Games.

### **Years 5 and 6**

In Years 5 and 6, there are specialist teachers for most subjects. In Year 5 pupils are introduced to Classical Studies (Greek and Roman mythology) as a prelude to studying Latin in Year 6.

### **Year 7**

Up to twenty-eight pupils are selected following examination for entry into Year 7 at age 11+ and they join those pupils coming through from Year 6. Most of the new pupils will not have studied French or Latin and may be behind existing pupils in other subject areas. Saturday morning classes from March until July, prior to entry, will enable these pupils to begin to catch up with their peers before joining Westminster Under School. Year 7 pupils are placed in mixed forms for registration and PSHEE, but are separated into 'old boys' and 'new boys' for teaching.

### **Year 8**

In Year 8, the pupils are divided into four mixed forms for registration . They are also placed in four subject groups according to ability as follows:

**Maths**

**Humanities:** English, Geography, History, TPR

**Languages:** French, Greek, Latin, PSHEE

**Science:** Science, Art & Design, Computing, Music, Drama

Within each subject group there are four sets, named **Arnold, Benn, Gielgud and Wesley**. **Arnold** and **Gielgud** are Ductio Nova groups who follow a new curriculum, which has replaced Common Entrance in almost all cases. Pupils in **Wesley** are almost certain to be candidates for scholarships to senior schools, whilst pupils in **Benn** may well be scholarship candidates, depending on their performance in the Play Term. There is a great deal of commonality between the courses followed by pupils in all four groups. Pupils may be moved between the groups at the end of the Play Term if teaching staff feel a move is appropriate to match a pupil's academic profile.

We would generally expect candidates for scholarships to senior schools to be placed in Benn or Wesley for all four subject groups.

Greek is added to the curriculum in Year 8.

All pupils have a weekly PSHEE lesson and Study Skills is offered to pupils in all year groups.

All pupils in Years 7 and 8 receive age-appropriate Careers Advice which is delivered through a variety of platforms, including visiting speakers, PSHEE lessons and the Year 8 post-exam programme.

The School curriculum by year group and timetable is shown in tabular form at Appendix 1.

**Preparation for Senior Schools**

The pupils are prepared for entry to senior schools at age 13+ according to the requirements set by those schools. Since September 2020, entry to Westminster School is generally unconditional, subject to satisfactory performance in the ISEB Common Pre-Test in Year 6. Some pupils will elect to sit scholarship examinations at the end of Year 8. All pupils entering at 11+ are expected to go to Westminster.

Teachers liaise regularly with colleagues at Westminster School to ensure a seamless transition between the schools. Around a quarter of Year 8 pupils sit The Challenge, Westminster's scholarship examination, or other schools' scholarship papers. This figure is significantly higher than the number of scholarships available, but it reflects the very high standard of work being achieved by the pupils. Notwithstanding their academic work, pupils are strongly encouraged to continue to partake fully in all the extra-curricular activities on offer.

Pupils placed in Ductio Nova sets who are candidates for schools other than Westminster will be prepared fully for Common Entrance or other required entrance exams.

Please refer to the “Transfer from Westminster Under School to Westminster School” section of the Admissions Policy for further information on transfer between the two schools.

### **Syllabus**

Parents are given details of the curriculum at the beginning of each term in the form of a Curriculum Update. These updates are also posted on Aptus, the School’s Virtual Learning Environment.

### **Academic Planning and Oversight**

The Assistant Master (Teaching and Learning), working closely with the Assistant Master (Academic) is responsible for overseeing academic provision across the school and for monitoring learning, teaching and academic progress.

The Heads of each Department are responsible for the planning and delivery of the scheme of work (SOW) and the co-ordination of staff in their Departments. Heads of Departments meet each term to discuss areas of development within the curriculum and their departments. Each year, we also hold a joint Heads of Departments meeting with Westminster School, during which good practice is shared and collaborative planning is fostered.

We aim for a whole school approach where high quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils, is the first step in responding to pupils who have or may have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). Teachers are expected to accommodate pupils’ learning differences in order to reduce barriers to effective learning. However, where a teacher suspects a pupil may need additional support with their learning a referral form will be completed and sent to the School’s SENDCO. Further details of the referral and assessment process can be found in the SEND Policy.

### **Presentation**

Pupils are required to follow the School policy for presentation of their work which is at Appendix 2. It is displayed in all classrooms and referred to by teachers regularly. If any pupil is found to have issues with handwriting they will be identified and referred to the Head of English who will then raise the concern with the SENDCO and the Assistant Master (Teaching and Learning).

### **The Role of Homework**

We are strong believers in the importance of homework for intelligent and well-motivated pupils. Homework allows pupils to demonstrate that they have a clear understanding of their academic work, it helps pupils to make strong academic progress and aids pupils and teachers in identifying areas to strengthen.

Homework can be used to prepare for lessons and as a means of stretching the ablest.

Homework is also designed to encourage individual and independent learning.

Homework is important in fostering good working habits in the pupils and an understanding of the importance of application (see the Aims of the Curriculum on page 1).

Homework should always be used to develop and enhance what is learnt in the classroom. It should, therefore, be seen as building on what is covered in lessons, rather than as a separate assignment or as introducing a topic.

See the Homework Policy at Appendix 3 for a fuller summary of the School's current approach to homework.

### **Identification of Learning Differences**

All pupils are considered to be academically gifted having sat demanding Entrance Assessments at 7+, 8+ or 11+.

When a teacher suspects that a pupil may have a learning difference or difficulty, details are recorded in a Study Skills referral form, available on our MIS system, which is acted upon by the SENDCO.

Our provision for academic support is outlined in the SEND policy.

### **Continued Professional Development for Teaching Staff**

A whole-school Teaching and Learning focus is established at the start of each academic year, and this is revisited during Teaching and Learning meetings held at several points in the year. Staff are invited to collaborate in small cross-departmental Research Groups, with oversight by the Assistant Master (Teaching and Learning), to explore how ideas from educational research could be implemented in the classroom.

Staff are encouraged to maintain a professional dialogue with their colleagues at Westminster School with a particular focus on teaching and learning in Key Stage 3.

Staff are strongly encouraged to participate in relevant external training and a whole-school budget is available to meet the cost of external CPD provision.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation of Teaching and Learning**

This takes place through learning walks, formal and informal lesson observation, particularly through the Professional Development and Review (PDR) process and through formal departmental review including work scrutiny. Each half term, colleagues are encouraged to undertake at least one mutual observation.

### **Other Relevant Events**

Outside the classroom Music, Drama, Art and Sport have an important part to play in School life and trips and competitions are valued highly. There are opportunities to join choirs and orchestras, take part in plays and concerts, participate in a whole range of sports and House competitions for scrabble, general knowledge, chess, public speaking, music and sport.

Every year group has a compulsory residential trip as well as numerous day trips to museums, galleries, theatres, churches, temples, castles and so on. There are also regular trips abroad during the school holidays: the Classics trip to Italy, the French trip and the football and cricket tours. In recent years the choir has toured South Africa, Spain, Portugal, and Croatia and Montenegro. There have been Geography trips to Iceland and the USA.

Events such as the Harvest Festival, Luck of the Draw lunch, Christmas Fair, Readathon and Summer Fete are all designed to raise awareness amongst the pupils of people who enjoy few luxuries or privileges in the UK and abroad. All the money raised in these events is donated to a range of charities. Pupils are also encouraged to help the local community.

Approximately three times a term, visiting speakers will address the whole school, usually during a Monday morning assembly. Speakers can include politicians, journalists, authors, sports personalities, explorers and lawyers. The School's central London location gives it ready access to distinguished visitors of many kinds and their talks help to give the pupils a broader perspective on life.

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Assistant Master (Teaching and Learning) who reports to the Master.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

## Appendix 1 – School Curriculum

Table showing structure of the School Curriculum for the academic year 2022- 2023.

Lessons are 35 minutes in duration.

	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7 - OB	Year 7 - NB	Year 8 - Nova	Year 8 - Scholarship
English	7	7	6	6	5	5	5	5
Maths	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5
Science	2	2	4	4	5.5	5.5	5	5
French	1	2	3	4	4	5	5	5
History	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.5	2.5
Geography	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.5	2.5
TPR	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1
Latin				3	4	4	1	1
Greek							1	1.5
Classics			1					
Drama	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Computing	2	2	2	1	1	1	1.5	1
Art	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Games	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
PE	2	2	2	1	0.5	0.5	1.5	1.5
Swimming	2	2	2	2				
PSHE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Skills / Form Time	1		1					
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>

7 OB – pupils who were taught in school before Year 7 (old boys)

7 NB – pupils who arrived in School at the Year 7 (11+) entry point (new boys)

8 Nova – pupils following the Ductio Nova course (Arnold and Gielgud teaching groups)

8 Sch – pupils following the Scholarship course (Benn and Wesley teaching groups)



## Appendix 2 - Policy for Pupils on Presentation of Work



# PUPIL PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

You should take pride in all you do at the Under School.  
Show this in your writing - make sure the reader is on your side!

### EQUIPMENT

You are expected to have the following items, in every lesson:

- A named pencil case
- At least two blue ink pens (plus replacement cartridges if necessary)
- A green fineliner for pupil corrections
- At least two pencils
  - An eraser
  - A sharpener
  - A highlighter
- A 15cm or 30 cm ruler
- At least five colouring-pencils
- Scissors and a large glue stick

### PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

All pupils are expected to:

- Write the date in the top right-hand corner of the page; underline using a ruler
- Write the title in the centre of the page; underline using a ruler
  - Indent new paragraphs
  - Write exercise-numbers etc. in the margin
- Write in blue ink once the *Pen Licence* has been acquired. Do not use biro pen.
  - Draw a simple line through errors before making corrections; avoid scribbles at all costs!
  - Draw diagrams and illustrations in pencil

Where these guidelines are not followed, the teacher will use a **yellow dot** when marking. If the next piece of work does not show an improvement in presentation the pupil will be given a **red dot** and expected to rewrite that piece of work using correct presentation.

**When word-processing:**

- Lay-out the date and title as above, in bold for emphasis
  - Stick to a sensible font, size and colour
- Leave a line between paragraphs, answers and tasks; there is no need to indent when typing

## Appendix 3 – Homework Policy

### HOMEWORK POLICY

The time taken to do homework will vary significantly from pupil to pupil, but the following may be considered as a rough guide. Homework will always be set on a specific night and should not exceed the recommended 30 minutes per homework, except in Year 8 when 35 – 40-minute homeworks can occasionally be set.

Year 3:	20 minutes per night, plus reading
Year 4:	30 minutes per night, plus reading
Year 5:	50-60 minutes per night (two subjects)
Year 6:	60 minutes per night (two subjects) + one 90 minutes (three subjects)*
Year 7:	90-135 minutes per night (two or three subjects with two-weekly rotation, plus an additional Latin vocab and French vocab homework in each two-week cycle)
Year 8:	90-135 minutes per night (two or three subjects with a two-weekly rotation)

\*the full homework allocation in Year 6 is introduced from the Lent Term

#### Parental Support for Homework

Parents are expected to help in various ways, as outlined in the parents' handbook:

- Provide a suitable desk and chair in a quiet room.
- Encourage your son to check the tasks set on Aptus and to mark tasks as complete once he has finished. Be prepared to reject work that seems to have been done too quickly.
- Show an interest in the homework, engage in discussion with your child about the tasks set, but encourage them to work independently.
- Slower and more anxious pupils sometimes spend too long on homework in efforts to attain perfection. This can become a problem and the form teacher should be alerted if this is the case.
- Inform the teacher if a problem arises and homework cannot be completed. If a pupil gets stuck with their homework, parents are encouraged to help by showing how to do it, but not doing it for them. If significant help has been given, it is helpful to email the teacher concerned to keep them informed.