



WESTMINSTER UNDER SCHOOL

Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum Policy

Written by:	TSL
Version number:	4.5
Effective date:	February 2024
Summary of changes:	4.4 - Updates to preparation for senior schools section to reflect the changing landscape of senior school entry routes; update to aims to reflect the School's focus on adapted teaching and learning
Approved by:	Education Committee
Related policies:	Assessment, Marking, Recording and Reporting Policy Admissions Policy SEND Policy Careers Policy Policy on English as an Additional Language Staff Handbook (The Presentation of Work Policy and Homework Policy are appendices to this policy)
Audience:	Governors, parents, staff
Previous versions:	4.4 - November 2023
Next review date:	September 2024
Person(s) in charge of review:	Assistant Master, Teaching and Learning

Contents

Introduction and Aims	3
Entry Points and Outline Curriculum	3
Years 3 and 4	3
Years 5 and 6	4
Year 7.....	4
Year 8.....	4
Preparation for Senior Schools	5
Syllabus.....	6
Academic Planning and Oversight.....	6
Presentation.....	6
The Role of Homework	6
Identification of Learning Differences.....	7
Continued Professional Development for Teaching Staff	7
Monitoring and Evaluation of Teaching and Learning.....	7
Other Relevant Events	8
Appendix 1 – School Curriculum	7
Appendix 2 - Policy for Pupils on Presentation of Work	8
Appendix 3 – Homework Policy.....	9

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, encouraging our pupils to question and assisting 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;
- give constructive support, adapting teaching where considered necessary in order to ensure that all pupils are able to access learning and achieve desirable outcomes;
- 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 the majority of subject-based teaching, including PSHEE, but are separated into 'old boys' and 'new boys' for teaching in French and Latin, in order to accommodate the need to differentiate, according to the levels at which the 'new boys' join us in the Languages. In Mathematics, the boys are placed in four groups according to ability.

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, PSHE

Languages: French, Greek, Latin

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 curriculum which has replaced Common Entrance in almost all cases. Pupils in **Wesley** tend to be capable of working at the requisite level 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 in the second half of the Play Term if teaching staff feel a move is appropriate to match a pupil's academic profile, but this is rare, as a great deal of time is spent on ensuring that our grouping decisions for each boy, once they reach the end of the Election Term of Year 7, are the right ones.

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, alongside Latin.

All pupils have a weekly PSHE lesson. Pupils are also offered guidance on study strategies through Form Teachers and subject teachers; there is a particular focus on study skills during Year 7, with sessions run by Elevate Education.

All pupils in Years 7 and 8 receive age-appropriate Careers Advice which is delivered through a variety of platforms, including visiting speakers, PSHE 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. Entry to Westminster School is generally unconditional, but subject to satisfactory performance in Year 6 in the ISEB Common Pre-Tests, and written tests in English and Maths, set by Westminster School, as well as continuing good progress in Years 7 and 8. The vast majority of pupils in Year 8 transfer to Westminster School; all pupils entering at 11+ are expected to transfer to Westminster School. Each year, a small number of Year 8 pupils choose to transfer to other senior schools.

Teachers liaise regularly with colleagues at Westminster School to ensure a seamless transition between the Schools for the vast majority of Year 8 boys who opt for Westminster. A small number of Year 8 pupils sit The Challenge, Westminster's scholarship examination, or other schools' scholarship papers, such as Eton's King's Scholarship papers. Though the number of Year 8 pupils taking the scholarship papers tends to be greater than the number of scholarships available, it reflects the very high standard of work being achieved by the pupils. Notwithstanding this, the decision for Year 8 pupils to be entered for scholarship examinations must, in the first instance, be approved by the Master, in consultation with the Assistant Master, Academic, and Assistant Master, Teaching and Learning, and a pupil's subject teachers. We would expect scholarship candidates to be in the Wesley teaching groups for most, if not all, subject blocks, and to be making academic progress that suggests that they have the potential to perform confidently and convincingly in the scholarship examinations. Other factors are also taken into consideration in reaching decisions about the suitability of individual pupils for scholarship examinations, including qualitative judgements based on classroom performance, and informal, as well as formal, assessments undertaken by pupils: the decision to support a pupil's suitability for scholarship examinations is not determined by summative data alone. Pupils who are registered for the scholarship examinations, having been approved by the Master, may sit scholarship mock examinations in the Lent term. Pupils who are not registered for the scholarship route take the School's internal assessments during the course of Year 8, culminating in the Ductio Nova examinations in the Election term. These pupils are not permitted to take scholarship mock papers during the mock examination period.

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.

In common with Year 6, during the phase of ISEB Pre-Tests, and written tests, Year 8 pupils are strongly encouraged to continue to partake fully in all the extra-curricular activities on offer, irrespective of their choice of senior school and entry route.

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 at least twice 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, adapted 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 believes that a pupil may need additional support with their learning, referrals can be brought to the attention of the School’s SENDCO by submitting an online form via the School’s online MIS (Management Information Service). 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. It can also encourage individual and independent learning, as well as foster good working habits in the pupils and an understanding of the importance of application (see the Aims of the Curriculum on page 1).

Nevertheless, we also believe strongly that homework tasks should be purposeful and achievable within the 20 – 30 minute allotted time for each task, as per the Homework Policy in Appendix 3. Teaching staff are encouraged to set homework tasks to develop and enhance what is learnt in the classroom, rather than as a separate assignment or to introduce 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 believes 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. The Teaching and Learning meetings are a combination of compulsory, formal meetings for all teaching staff, and more informal lunchtime discussions ('Teaching and Learning Community'). Staff are invited to collaborate in small cross-departmental professional learning groups, with oversight by the Assistant Master (Teaching and Learning), to explore how ideas from educational research and best practice 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.

Across any one academic year, 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 2023- 2024.

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	4	4
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					
Total	38	40	44	44	45	45	45	45

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.

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: 4 x 60 minutes per night (two subjects) + 1 x 90 minutes (three subjects)*

Year 7: 4 x 60 minutes per night (two subjects) + 1 x 90 minutes (three subjects)

Year 8: 4 x 60 minutes per night (two subjects) + 1 x 90 minutes (three subjects)

*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.