

Curriculum Policy

Date approved:	23 September 2026
Review cycle:	Every 2 years; July 2028
Party responsible:	Student Committee
Linked Policies:	More Able Student Policy; Assessment, Recording & Reporting Policy, Literacy Policy, Schemes of Work, SEND Policy

Curriculum Intent

Our vision for The Swanage School is that it adopts a ‘human-scale’ approach to learning. This means we value the needs of the individual when designing and refining our curriculum offer. We value their academic achievement and their personal development, both during their time with us and beyond. We believe that the relationships that our students build with themselves, the school community and the wider community inform their relationship with our curriculum and, only if these relationships are positive, will our students thrive.

The breadth of our curriculum is supported by excellent facilities and staff domain expertise. Within a typical week, for example, students could have the opportunity to prepare food with a professional chef; design and print items using a laser printer; record a podcast; prepare for a performance at the local theatre with a West End director; and tend a garden in our forest school.

Within subjects, we ensure the core knowledge in each subject is regularly reviewed, especially in areas where content is contested, such as History and English Literature. We predominantly look to the National Curriculum to guide subject content whilst ensuring that our curriculum content choices are informed by the best available research in a domain, and suitable for our context. In the transition phase, we teach the humanities through project-based learning (PBL). This helps students to develop independence and to make connections between subjects and develop their schema within and across certain domains. A PBL approach also provides the opportunity for projects within the local community.

Our academic curriculum is complemented by our pastoral curriculum and our extra-curricular activities. Our pastoral curriculum focuses on developing the pillars of The Swanage School Way: Character, Community, Productivity and Ambition, and is delivered through crew time and our Pillar Days. Our broad extra-curricular offer, notably our annual Challenge Week, highlights the value we place on personal development. Our students move from the transition phase (year 7), to the foundation phase (year 8), to the gateway phase (year 9) and, finally, the next-steps phase (years 10 and 11), with each phase having their own Pastoral Lead and associated curriculums.

All students are taught Personal, Social and Health Education, in line with the statutory guidance and the needs of our students and content. This includes Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).

We place our school at the heart of the Swanage community and we provide our students with the skills, knowledge, qualifications and networks that allow them to contribute to, and enrich enterprises, organisations and industries within that community. We also prepare our students for life beyond Swanage and our curriculum provides them with the choice to pursue further study and employment anywhere they choose. We are currently developing our ‘Swanage 360’ curriculum which allows students to accumulate, and record, work-based skills, integrated into their curriculum subjects. These skills are linked to the continuous development of student oracy, which underpins our curriculum. Alongside developing students oracy, literacy is the bedrock of our curriculum.

Our school community includes a higher-than-average percentage of students with SEND. Our curriculum provides a universal offer that is accessible for all students and our teachers and leaders are expert at making targeted adaptations for need, in line with our ‘human-scale’ approach.

To summarise, we aim to:

- Remain true to a human-scale approach with relationships at the heart of learning
- Provide an intellectually rigorous curriculum, which allows students to achieve qualifications
- Provide a broad curriculum offer, which is supported by excellent facilities, expert instruction and constant review of content
- Complement our academic curriculum with our pastoral curriculum and extra-curricular activities
- Underpin our curriculum with the development of literacy, numeracy and oracy
- Provide a universal offer which allows for targeted and specialist adaptations where needed

Curriculum Implementation

Academic Curriculum

Transition, Foundation and Gateway

All students are taught English, Maths, Science, Art, Computing, Design Technology, Hospitality & Catering, Creative Media Design, Drama, Music, French, Physical Education and Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE).

In the transition phase, students are taught humanities subjects (History, Geography and PRE (Philosophy, Religion & Ethics) through Project Based Learning (PBL). In the foundation and gateway phases, the humanities are taught as separate subjects.

In the transition and foundation phases, students are taught Computing through Robotics.

Next Steps

All students are entered into GCSE English Language, English Literature, Maths and either Triple Award (separate Biology, Chemistry and Physics) or Combined Award Science GCSE.

As well as studying English, Maths and Science, in year 9, students choose three option subjects to study in the next steps phase. Our option subjects may include: Art & Design, Computer Science, Creative Media Production, Design Technology (product design), Drama, French, Further Maths, Statistics, Geography, History, Hospitality & Catering, Music, Philosophy, Religion and Ethics (PRE) and Physical Education (PE). Students are required to choose at least one of the subjects in bold. The option subjects offered each year can vary based on the teacher expertise, facilities and the needs of the cohort.

In the next-steps phase, students are also taught PSHE and core PE.

If the students are deemed competent in a subject that is not taught as part of the curriculum, they are offered support to sit appropriate qualifications in those subjects.

The design and review of the academic curriculum is the responsibility of the Headteacher, the Directors of Learning and Subject Leads in collaboration with subject teachers.

Interventions

Based on need, students attend interventions during curriculum time. These interventions focus on developing literacy and personal development skills and are delivered by specialists in the Hub.

Students can also be selected to attend forest school with our outdoor education trained teacher in a dedicated outside area.

Pastoral Curriculum

Each phase is taught their pastoral curriculum through crew time. The curriculum focuses on developing the four pillars outlined in The Swanage School Way. These pillars are also developed through the academic curriculum and encouraged through our rewards system. The pastoral curriculum is also reinforced through other crew time activities, such as inter-crew competitions and challenges as well as Pillar Days, in which we collapse the curriculum to focus on developing the pillars. Reading is developed as part of the pastoral curriculum.

At the start of the transition phase, the students attend a two-day residential in which they take part in outdoor education activities to build relationships within their crew and phase, and build belonging at TSS.

The school's careers and work experiences programme helps to prepare students for their onward journey. This programme is overseen by the Community and Engagement Committee and is explained in a separate document, published on the school website.

The design and review of the pastoral curriculum is the responsibility of the Deputy Headteacher and the Pastoral Leads in collaboration with crew leaders.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Staff offer voluntary extra-curricular activities during lunchtimes and after school. These include sports clubs, gig rowing, Green Car, creative writing and choir. Peripatetic music teachers are invited in to instruct students in instrument playing and singing during the school day.

Performing arts skills are encouraged and celebrated at TSS and, every year, we put on a sell-out run of performances at the local Mowlem Theatre. Typically, a third of the students in the school will be a part of the performance, either as actors or stage crew.

In the final week of the academic year, during curriculum time, the school offers a variety of accessible activities as part of our Challenge Week. All students are expected to take part. Activities range from London theatre trip to Wales surfing trip to Swanage well-being activities. The week ends with a plenary session and celebration assembly.

Curriculum Impact

The effectiveness of the Curriculum Policy is monitored, evaluated and reviewed both day to day and more strategically:

I. On-going monitoring:

- Formal lesson observations
- Learning walks
- Sampling of students' work
- Feedback from students
- Discussions between members of staff
- Feedback from parents.

2. Strategic monitoring and evaluation:

- Schemes of Work are reviewed and the end of the period of study, or annually as appropriate
- Analysis of student summative assessment data
- Feedback from students

The Governing Body will review the Curriculum policy every two years and assess its implementation and effectiveness.