



OUR CURRICULUM FOR 2011

Since coming to King's, one of my main priorities has been to develop further an educational experience that is intellectually stimulating and prepares students to be leaders in how they think and what they do. Exam results are a top priority for that, but much of what is measured by exams is increasingly uninspiring, and exam results alone do not prepare our students to be active contributors to society, nor necessarily to gain places at top universities. A great deal about today's independent schools, and especially King's, is right and good, but we have sought to change that which can be even better. So I am delighted to tell you more about Curriculum 2011, the way in which we will pursue and achieve excellence for your child. Simply put, our vision is of an unequalled academic education for the 21st century. The way we will achieve it is through these changes to our curriculum and the structure of our working day.

Chris Ramsey, Headmaster

THE TIMING OF THE KING'S DAY

We are a busy day school, drawing pupils from a very wide geographic area. We will retain the outstanding number (over 120) of before and after-school clubs and activities and, indeed, add more. But we want to start the day more crisply, achieve more active and deeper learning, allow our teachers to develop topics further within lessons, and to capitalize on our students' ability to concentrate, to hold and develop ideas and to fly in class. So, we will begin each day with a quick registration session and straight into period 1 at 9.10am. Lessons will last 55 minutes, with a 5 minute gap between each. We will move assemblies or tutor periods to after the morning break. Over a two-week cycle we will have fifty teaching periods, giving in real terms more teaching time... and more importantly better learning time.

THE CURRICULUM – REMOVES AND SHELLS

The curriculum will continue as a broad and balanced academic curriculum: Thinking Skills in Removes will disappear as a separate subject, since we believe the skills of questioning and independent, problem-based learning, are now embedded in all subjects and will be particularly taken on in a new Religious Studies curriculum. Time for core English teaching will be increased, and three languages will be taught on a carousel, allowing every student to experience French, German and Spanish in the Removes and then be able to choose which two languages to study in the Shells. In Removes, the King's Scholarship selection process requires pupils to do and report on an area of individual interest and research.

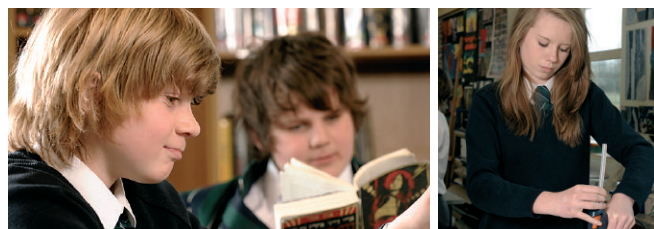
FIRST CHOICES – THIRDS

Not all students will have aptitudes for all of the wide range of subjects studied in the first two years: specialising slightly earlier frees up curriculum time to study chosen subjects in greater depth. So, we will introduce a first set of choices as pupils enter the Third Year. They will be invited to choose four from French, German, Spanish, Latin, Classical Civilisation, Design Technology, Art, ICT and Music. This means that those who know they are minded to take two languages, for example, can concentrate on developing them; those who are more creative can focus on these areas.

GCSE – FOURTHS AND FIFTHS

The biggest change in the GCSE years will be the introduction of iGCSE. We see these exams as more academically rigorous for our pupils in a number of subjects, offering better preparation for advanced study and more highly regarded by universities. As a school we will therefore be moving to iGCSE syllabuses in Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, French, German, Spanish and Music.

Our core curriculum to GCSE will be English Language, English Literature, Maths, at least one Language, at least two Sciences and three further options, drawn from the same option pool as now. Time allocation for English will be increased (leading to two GCSEs, in Language and Literature), which will have the added benefit of developing sophisticated communication skills. The key to the changes is that each GCSE will have increased time, so that we can explore things in more depth, teach beyond the exam syllabus and allow our pupils to explore more than that which gets a qualification.

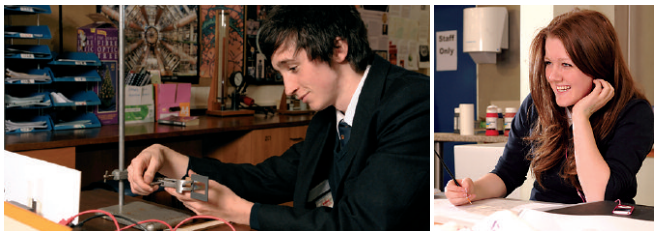


A further change concerns PSHE ('Life Skills'). During the Removes, Shells and Third Year, important core material is covered in timetabled lessons, taught by trained specialists. During the Fourth and Fifth Year, the syllabus for PSHE consists of reinforcement of key issues. From September 2011, there will therefore be no timetabled PSHE lessons: instead the syllabus will be covered by means of talks or seminars, delivered in the main by external experts. This will have the added benefit of allowing all Tutors to focus on key pastoral issues as well as target setting and supporting study skills.

SIXTH FORM – EXTENDED PROJECTS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

In the Sixth Form, students will continue to study to four AS Levels in the L6th, continuing to three or four A2 Levels, in order to ensure that our students continue to be offered places on the best courses at the best universities. Students will have more directed time in total, and fewer 'free' periods. We continue to recommend the Extended Project (EP) as a way of demonstrating independent learning and we have already concrete evidence of students who have gained more/better offers and in some cases places because of having completed an Extended Project.

We intend to roll the EP experience out to lower year groups, and are planning to pilot the lower years' equivalent of the EP over the next two years.



ENRICHMENT

The major innovation for 2011 is enrichment. One double lesson per fortnight will be devoted to the enrichment programme, which will consist of a number of compulsory units as well as a variety of subject areas allowing pupils to explore, learn and study outside the constraints of our traditional curriculum. Enrichment is ambitious in concept and scope and we will be sending further details as well as a full guide to the programme to all pupils and parents in the summer. Broadly speaking, enrichment has two outstanding benefits:

- **It will widen pupils' intellectual horizons, building on their (and teachers') enthusiasms beyond exam constraints, allowing areas to be explored and accredited which would be otherwise impossible**
- **It will give a real taste of independence - not only independent study and individual learning, but also of independent responsibility, leadership and community service**

In short, the enrichment programme will add academic experiences not normally open to pupils who follow a regular school curriculum (even a good one, as we have traditionally had at King's); indeed some of the learning will promote areas which are stifled in a traditional curriculum (for example, a range of languages, philosophy and astronomy, problem solving and academic research).



This will help our students become more intellectually curious, better read - the kind of students who are most welcomed by universities and employers. It will also add community service and outreach, which we have long felt is an area we should improve.

The programme will be structured within six themed groups:

- **Linguistics** (*new languages such as Mandarin, Greek, Italian etc*)
- **Arts in context** (*a dozen options including textiles, creative writing, animation etc*)
- **Understanding the universe** (*geology, philosophy, astronomy etc*)
- **The world in focus** (*current affairs, finance theory, ecology etc*)
- **Problem Solving** (*electronics, engineering, computer aided design etc*)
- **Research skills** (*the basics of extended research, referencing etc*)

A further two will be available for older pupils only:

- **Sports leadership**
- **Community Action**

The Removes will have a compulsory programme, covering research skills, creative arts (drama and performance) and the basics of extended project writing. In the Shells, pupils will choose one option theme per term, choosing three different themes per year, and within them a preference of activities. Each activity will lead to accreditation and reports.

In the Third to Fifth Years, students may opt to spend a whole year on a specific theme; they will complete a reflective journal which will be assessed by their Tutor.

In the Sixth Form most students will participate in Community Action for at least one year, with options including a large number of activities helping the community outside King's, as well as opportunities to enrich the community within the school (for example, helping teaching within the languages programme, creating internal current affairs publications etc), whilst the Sports Leadership programme will also give opportunities for sports coaching, life guarding etc both within school and outside. Again, a reflective journal will be kept and assessed. All of this is in addition to normal A Level teaching.

CONCLUSION

We have been keen to preserve what is excellent about a King's education and our traditional academic curriculum, as well as the shape of our day, whilst being bold enough to change where it will improve pupils' experience and our leavers' futures. These changes - improvements in what the pupils learn, how they learn it, and how they develop as students - will make King's an even better school. They are at the heart of our aim to be the leading co-educational day school of the region and an innovative national player.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why the move to longer lessons?

A: Because the current 35 minute lesson is effectively even shorter, since we have no 'travel time' and our pupils are capable of more extended learning. In 55 minutes ideas can be better developed and embedded, there can be variety and reinforcement. Indeed, this is generally considered the optimum length for teaching periods.

Q: What are iGCSEs?

A: International GCSEs have the same status officially as GCSEs, but are much more attractive to most universities and for A Level teaching. They are not normally assessed through 'bite sized' modular tests, so teaching continues uninterrupted through the two year course and the students have to hold a breadth of knowledge together until the final exams. In addition, their syllabus content tends to be greater and more intellectually rigorous. For all of these reasons we believe that they will stimulate our students more, that the sharper challenges will suit them better and that gaining teaching time through having fewer modular exams is a benefit. Most leading academic schools are moving increasingly to iGCSE in many subjects.

Q: Why only two compulsory sciences to GCSE?

A: Actually we think the vast majority of pupils will do three to iGCSE, but there are students whose talents lie elsewhere, and two Science iGCSEs is fine for them.

Q: Will there be further curriculum changes?

A: There is likely to be a continued growth in iGCSE, and future subject options are always under consideration. The Sixth Form curriculum is also under continuous review, but there are no firm plans to adopt alternatives to the A Level system as yet.

Q: Why allow Third Formers choices?

A: Because we have an excellent, broad Removes and Shells curriculum, but some pupils have clear strengths and weaknesses and some have felt the frustrations of doing subjects they know they will be giving up.

Q: Will there be fewer 'extra' curricular activities with so much activity in the enrichment programme?

A: No. We have been careful to distinguish between 'enrichment activities' which are academic or community activities, with specific, timetabled and assessed content. Clubs and societies, as well as sporting and other activities, rehearsals etc, with a more fluid population and a less formal content to them, are a crucial part of what we do.



Q: Why 'community action'?

A: Because we believe we need to create young people who, as well as achieving great results, have ideals, can work alongside others and are leaders, who want to contribute to their community and show the benevolence which is one of our core values: we want to nurture habits of service and leadership which the world needs - and we believe we can do this through engaging more with the community as a school.

Q: Why are we planning to do nine GCSEs?

A: Our main aim in terms of exams is for top grades. For some pupils there will be possibilities to take further GCSEs (eg as part of enrichment), but our vision for our pupils is of independent, exciting learning, and that will be best served by the new curriculum including the enrichment element. We have done extensive research with top universities and other major academic schools, and there is absolutely no doubt that nine GCSEs are plenty for all courses at all universities and for all careers and futures. Indeed, most universities prefer nine top grades to nine top grades and one lower.

Q: What about music lessons?

A: They will be 30 minutes, so that no pupil will ever miss a whole academic lesson.

Q: Is it true that effectively King's is dropping one GCSE to give more time to activities?

A: Not at all: in fact we are devoting more time to GCSEs, and although most pupils will do nine whereas now most do ten, research done by leading academics and our own staff shows that the average GCSE score is always more valued than the total GCSE score - in other words, quality beats quantity. Enrichment is not activities - it is designed to foster a love and respect for learning for its own sake, and we are certain that it will succeed.

