



# LITTLE HEATH SCHOOL

Key Stage 3 Curriculum guide

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# The Key Stage 3 curriculum

## FROM YOUR HEADTEACHER

We are proud of our innovative curriculum at Little Heath School, a student-centred curriculum that builds upon the long-standing academic success of the school and at the same time reflects the best of modern thinking on teaching, independent learning and the needs of a changing society in the 21st century.

For many years, Little Heath School has enjoyed an outstanding local reputation for encouraging students to stretch themselves and aim high. Our curriculum has been central to this success, being broad and balanced in order to provide the best opportunities for all children, regardless of prior ability and background. Our programmes of study build on that tradition of academic excellence, but in an invigorating and innovative way. We will empower students to take more responsibility for their own learning and their own work, so that they are fully prepared for any future educational challenges that life may throw at them, whether at university, college or in employment.

There is no doubt that our modern society requires young people to learn and develop quickly and to respond to the competitive

demands of a fast-paced world. A school's curriculum needs to evolve with these changes. We are looking to nurture a more confident versatile learner; someone who can adapt to changing social, political and economic circumstances. We want to encourage young people to become independent learners for life. We do not want to encourage students to jump through educational hoops, based on narrow end-point testing. Recent educational research shows that students make the most progress when they are engaged in their own learning, see its relevance and worth and, in many cases, plan their own work and timescales. This in turn makes them more likely to obtain the highest grades at GCSE, Advanced Level and beyond, thus making them more employable in the future.

We are excited about our Key Stage 3 curriculum, and want you to share our excitement. Parents have a huge role to play in supporting learning at home. This booklet outlines some of the key principles behind the Little Heath School student-centred curriculum. It focuses on the undoubted benefits for your sons and daughters, in terms of their qualifications, their knowledge, their skills and competencies and, most importantly, their enjoyment in learning.





# Core skills

The aim of Little Heath School's student-centred curriculum is to provide students with exciting opportunities to develop new skills, knowledge and understanding, and to apply their learning in a range of different contexts, thus becoming effective learners for life, whatever career path they choose.

The core skills that form the heart of the Key Stage 3 curriculum enable students to develop into well-rounded and versatile individuals, becoming competent as:

- 1.** Independent Enquirers
- 2.** Team Workers
- 3.** Self-Managers
- 4.** Creative Thinkers
- 5.** Reflective Learners
- 6.** Effective Participators

All of the curriculum learning opportunities at Little Heath School include some focus on these core skills, whether within traditional academic subject areas or in more innovative co-curricular activities such as Enterprise Days or Enquiry Projects. In this way, students are able to embed the core skills in their own learning, thus avoiding the long-standing educational concern over students not being able to transfer skills from one classroom to another, or even more significantly, into a "real life" context.

Key Stage 3 will be a crucial part of the 11-18 curriculum at Little Heath School, with the two year programme ensuring that students develop all of these core skills, and the knowledge and understanding required



in subject areas, before they embark on accredited GCSE, BTEC and eventually Advanced Level courses of study. Years 7 and 8 will prepare students for more challenging courses in Key Stages 4 and 5, and the additional curriculum time in those Key Stages will also allow for more enriched and enhanced learning experiences for students, rather than feeling rushed by the demands of a content-heavy curriculum.

We are keen to emphasise that not all of these skills will be developed solely within a classroom environment. Little Heath School will continue to value and promote extra-curricular activity. From the beginning of their time at Little Heath School, when they join in Year 7, students will be encouraged to involve themselves in all sorts of sporting, musical, dramatic, cultural and artistic experiences. Our annual prize assemblies will reward effort, commitment and participation as much as they will reward academic excellence. We want students to become well-rounded individuals who can engage fully within society, whatever their chosen hobbies, pursuits or interests.

# Reading, writing and communication

The development of secure reading and writing skills and competencies is at the heart of our curriculum. In their discussions with us, parents recognise rightly that reading and writing are more important than any other skills. Without these fundamental skills, students are unable to access the curriculum effectively, and their progress suffers. This can have a long-lasting impact on a child's future.

This emphasis on reading and writing skills is not only a priority for our parents and their children. Local and national employers have expressed their concern to us that students lack the basic reading and writing skills to operate successfully in the world of work. While this may be a generalisation, Little Heath School is committed to improving further these crucial life skills in our students. Learning to read quickly, to scan, to

skim, to consider bias and to recognise persuasive techniques - these are vital skills in our media-rich, modern world. Confidence and versatility in the use of the written word is equally important. Students need to be able to adapt their use of language and tone for different audiences, to write confidently, clearly and with a high degree of accuracy and control. The Little Heath School Key Stage 3 curriculum places extra emphasis on the development of fluent, confident readers and controlled, adaptable writers. We are very excited by the prospect of making this commitment to our students and by the effect that this will have on their later education or careers.

Strong verbal communication should not be forgotten as a key employability skill. Employers want students who can express themselves fluently, and can present their ideas to audiences large and small in a range of circumstances. Confident public speaking is a rare skill in our modern society, but a vital one.

We recognise that we cannot make this a quick and short-lived fix. This is a planned and long term programme to support, challenge and extend learners of all abilities. We will build on the outstanding work of

“You cannot read to learn until you have learnt to read... unless children are secure in that basic skill (of decoding fluently) then reading remains a painful, difficult and obscure process”

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, JUNE 2011





our primary school partners who provide such a good foundation for the development of reading and writing, so that these two core skills are a learning focus from age 5 to 18. We will supplement the work done in Year 6 by completing a baseline assessment of reading, writing and spelling ability in the first term of Year 7, using this evaluation to inform our teaching in subsequent years.

As well as this immediate focus on reading and writing skills, other elements of the programme will be tailored to the individual needs of the students. Those children arriving at Little Heath School with reading and writing National Curriculum levels below expectation will be offered additional, bespoke intervention lessons to close the gaps in their learning. Students whose skills are solid in reading and writing will be offered direct literacy teaching in subject lessons so that they can develop the necessary control and fluency. More able students will be encouraged to experiment with different text types and be more innovative in their use of writing

conventions, such as in writing persuasive newspaper articles. All of these teaching and learning strategies will be supplemented by other literacy work in subject areas across the curriculum, with the key principle being that the teaching of literacy should be the responsibility of all teachers, not just the English department.

Ultimately, the school's vision is that no child should leave Little Heath School at the age of 18 without the necessary reading, writing and verbal communication skills to succeed in the world. It is an ambitious vision, but there can be no more important principle in education, and we know that we will get the backing of parents and students. This is a commitment to learning for life, as opposed to learning how to pass a test or regurgitate a narrow amount of information or knowledge without being able to apply that learning. As such, the learning experience will be all the more rich because of this commitment to securing the basics.



# Number skills

Skills with number, calculation and problem solving are just as vital as those in reading and writing. Our curriculum ensures that students leave Little Heath School with the necessary functional number skills to operate in the modern world. Again, we have listened carefully to the views of employers, universities and colleges, who tell us that the current Mathematics curriculum in England does not always produce the necessary number and calculation skills required by business or future education. It is not just that students are faced with the need for strong number skills in their everyday lives, in the supermarket, online, or in their applications for mortgages. More and more modern jobs require students to be numerate, even in careers that have traditionally employed students with qualifications in other disciplines.

As with reading and writing, our numeracy programme will concentrate on the needs of the individual student, with a focus on developing



“When young people compete for jobs and enter the workplace, they will be expected to communicate precisely and effectively”

**WOLF REPORT, 2011**

progressive skills from age 11 to 18. Students who arrive below their expected level will receive further support in order to make the required progress. Co-curricular work, for example in problem solving projects led by Science, Technology and Mathematics, will allow children to see number skills in application across the curriculum, to reinforce the important message about the role of functional mathematics in everyday life. Mathematical skill must be for all, delivered by all subjects. It cannot be seen as the sole responsibility of the Mathematics department, any more than literacy should be seen as belonging only in English lessons. We want all students to leave education with basic skills in number and calculation that they can apply in a range of contexts, whether studying for a History degree or going into employment.

At the same time, Little Heath School is proud of its excellent reputation in Mathematics, and recognises that for many students basic number skills will be merely a platform for future study. We want to sustain our reputation as a centre of excellence in the future, continuing to produce students in Mathematics and Further Mathematics who are able to secure places at the country's most prestigious universities.





# Challenge - enrichment and extension

At Little Heath School, we believe that the most important elements of any curriculum are fun, engagement and enjoyment in learning. We want to encourage all of our students to make the best of their learning opportunities at school, to stretch themselves and to rise to challenges with resilience and determination. Our commitment to excellence applies to all learning, inside and outside the classroom. This kind of enriched curriculum allows us to adopt a subtly different approach to our teaching, balancing a traditional, direct delivery of content and knowledge with a more student-centred approach to problem-solving and enquiry.

In our current education system, many parents and employers argue that too much attention is given to preparing students for final examination assessments, rather than providing them with exciting opportunities to learn and apply skills, thus preparing them for the future. A two year Key Stage 3 programme provides more time in Key Stage 4, so that teachers

are able to plan more enriched and challenging materials, rather than being hampered by the demands of a content-heavy curriculum.

Of course, we do not allow this to affect academic standards at the school. Instead, the enrichment of the curriculum encourages students to be more independent, to read around subjects, to complete more of their learning outside of the classroom, for example through enquiry-based projects or independent research. We must allow students to flourish during their first two years at secondary school, stretching them, challenging them and supporting them to do their best, and thus enabling them to develop the core skills that are required for further study and accreditation at GCSE and Advanced Level. It is our vision that no child will begin to study for these qualifications unless they have the core skills to succeed.

Extending and challenging students to do their best, and to stretch themselves, continues to be at the heart of the work we do as a learning community at Little Heath School. As students mature and enter the later years of their education, into Key Stages 4 and 5, the curriculum offer becomes more varied and personalised. Students are able to choose courses that suit their aspirations and future career plans, for example in enrichment courses in Italian or Extended Project Qualification, Advanced Level courses like Politics or Psychology, or in more vocational pathways such as BTEC Sport or Child Development. The aim is to move away from a one size fits all curriculum that does not serve the needs of our young people, towards a more versatile, tailored series of curriculum pathways that encourage independence and a commitment to hard work



# Subjects - knowledge and understanding

Our inspiring skills-based curriculum does not herald the decline of subject-based knowledge and understanding. Far from it. The principles of enrichment, extension, challenge and support apply equally to our reworking of subject curriculum plans. Teachers ensure that the vital elements of their subject curriculum are delivered in innovative and inspiring ways, allowing students to flourish in later study at Advanced Level or university.

The delivery of these subjects is enhanced and enriched in the same way as co-curricular projects, so that students are encouraged to complete more investigative work outside of their usual studies, for example a forensics project in Science. Teachers have developed new and enhanced lessons within schemes of work, so that the core skills are delivered in a meaningful way, often using the same language for learning. In this way, students recognise that skills can be transferred across the curriculum,

and their understanding of their own competencies, and areas for development is improved.

Experiences outside of the classroom are central to this subject enrichment and enhancement. In Years 7 and 8, many subject learning topics are introduced with a special launch event to engage and inspire students, perhaps in the form of a visiting expert or a relevant trip. Learning across the topics is celebrated at the end of the module by sharing the good work that has been done. This kind of principle applies equally to subject topics and co-curricular projects, helping to place the learning in a real life context.

## AT KEY STAGE 3 (YEARS 7 AND 8), YOUR CHILD WILL STUDY THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS

✓ Art	✓ Music
✓ Design and Technology (subjects on rotation)	✓ Numeracy, including calculation and problem solving
✓ Drama	✓ Physical Education
✓ English Language and Literature	✓ Personal, Social and Health Education
✓ Geography	✓ Reading, writing and communication
✓ History	✓ Religious Education
✓ Information Technology	✓ Science, including specialist Biology, Chemistry and Physics
✓ Mathematics	✓ Modern Foreign Languages (primarily French at KS3)



# Learning for life

We have already recognised that the world facing students in the 21st century is far removed from the one experienced by many of the teachers at Little Heath School, and indeed many parents, when they were at school themselves. While recognising the school's long tradition of academic success and its emphasis on traditional values, our student-centred Key Stage 3 curriculum is designed to provide a more flexible, modern and personalised learning framework that allows all children to succeed.

Therefore, in our curriculum re-design we have focused on the demands of the workplace for our students, both now and in the future. Our aim is to provide an outstanding quality of education that equips young people with the skills, knowledge and understanding required for life. We take seriously our commitment to ensure that our students are well-rounded individuals who can compete in the market place, taking up the best jobs and the best places at university. We have worked closely with local and regional employers to find out what skills they need from young people. For this reason, Little Heath School will continue to value vocational and traditionally academic courses equally as vital components of a broad and balanced education, where young people learn about the demands of the workplace and develop key skills to succeed within it. For some

“(All teachers should) demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy and the correct use of standard English...”

**TEACHING STANDARDS, 2012**



students, this allows for vocational qualification pathways to be developed at an earlier age. At Key Stages 4 and 5, opportunities are provided for students to experience work placements aligned with their future academic or employment plans. Knowledge of the demands of the workplace will be vital to all.

Careers guidance has a key part to play in allowing students to develop skills for the workplace. Students receive personalised careers guidance from Years 7 to 13 - guidance that adapts and changes as the student grows, develops and learns more about where they may be headed in the future. The two year Key Stage 3 curriculum means that students need better advice about their future subject choices in Years 7 and 8. The focus on student choice, on young people selecting what they want to study and managing their time and their work more independently means that unbiased, up to date and adaptable careers advice and guidance is even more important. We place such advice at the heart of our Key Stage 3 curriculum.



“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire”

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**

We are proud and excited to be able to deliver our Key Stage 3 curriculum to your children, and want you to share in our excitement. If you require any further information, we would love to talk to you about it, so please do not hesitate to contact us via email or through school reception.



## **LITTLE HEATH SCHOOL**

Little Heath Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG31 5TY

**TEL:** 0118 942 7337 **EMAIL:** [office@littleheath.org.uk](mailto:office@littleheath.org.uk)

**WEBSITE:** [www.littleheath.org.uk](http://www.littleheath.org.uk) **HEADTEACHER:** David Ramsden