



A New Curriculum Model for Highbury Grove.

Introduction

This document sets out the rationale for a new curriculum model for Highbury Grove School, to be implemented or phased in from September 2015.

The model shown in Appendix 1 has emerged following discussions with our staff Curriculum Working Party, Governors' Curriculum Committee, the Leadership Team and consultation with parents during the Parents' Forum in the autumn term.

Our goal is to deliver a curriculum that builds on the school's ethos of high aspirations and our identity as a specialist Music School, preparing all students for their future lives with a broad, challenging curriculum. The headline changes are as follows:

- Ensuring all students take at least one Arts, Humanities and Language at GCSE.
- Introducing computing at every stage from Year 7 - 13
- Developing a range of subject options in Year 9 instead of specialist schools.
- Moving to a stronger focus on teaching French in depth, with more time each week, instead of choosing two languages in Year 8.
- Providing more time for PE.
- Teaching History, Geography and RE as separate subjects instead of Humanities
- Putting the time for Friday afternoon enrichment and specialist schools back into normal curriculum lessons.
- Retaining Music Specialist School and providing more time for music in Year 7-9.
- Raising expectations by removing the Band A/Band B structure and running the Nurture class in Year 7 only.
- Introducing a weekly lesson of Personal Social and Health Education.

A new model for the timing of the day is also included in the proposal as shown in Appendix 2.

As with any model, our proposal represents a set of compromises and balances between competing demands for time and there may be some staffing constraints on what we can deliver. We may also need to move through a transitional phase before we have this model fully implemented.

Beyond the specifics covered here, it is important to regard the balance of subjects and time slots as merely the framework within which learning takes place. Important deep-level discussions about how subjects are taught, the details of the content and the learning opportunities within each subject and the connections between them are running in parallel. However, pragmatism and practicality make it necessary to agree the parameters of the timetable early on as it will drive decisions about staff allocations and recruitment.

The Parents' Forum on February 12th at 6pm is an opportunity to ask any questions that you have. We would also welcome your comments via email.

Governors will meet on February 24th to approve the final details of this plan so that the school can proceed with the implementation in terms of curriculum planning and staffing.

Tom Sherrington
January 2015

The 50-hour Two-week Timetable.

There are various different ways to divide up time across the week. Common models include 30 x 50 minute lessons (like the one we use now), 40 x 40 mins, 25 x hours and their two-week equivalents. The most common model by far, is a two-week model with hour-long lessons. That is the model we have used here. It gives a high level of flexibility in dividing up the time; it gives good double blocks of two hours for PE and reduces the number of single lessons in a day from a six-period day. The two-week model is very common and there are no major issues for students or staff in managing it. Week A and Week B would be similar but not in every detail and people soon adjust to that.

Further discussion on the timing of the day is included in Appendix 2.

The Rationale for the Curriculum:

Banding and Setting

This model effectively removes fixed banding arrangements from all year groups. All students will have access to the same curriculum entitlement. A small nurture class will be retained in Year 7 for just one year. Setting arrangements will remain in place across most academic subjects. We believe that setting is necessary to stretch the highest attaining students but we may have more parallel groups at each level, rather than a top-to-bottom hierarchy. All students will be able to access a broad range of options at KS4 with setting in place in Maths, English and Science. One option block will be given to additional Maths and English for a small group of targeted students at KS4 who would benefit from that extra support in place of one of their options.

Core Subjects: Maths, English and Science

The time allocation is consistent throughout KS3 for English and Maths. This is in balance with other demands on time and matches the core curriculum of many schools. In Year 9, an additional hour is given to Science as Triple Science students will need to commence their GCSE course in earnest, running into KS4. English gains time in Year 10 and again in Year 11 as students prepare for Literature and Language exams. Science increases to 20% curriculum time to allow preparation for three sciences and combined/ double science for all.

Specialist Schools

Although this has been a prominent feature of the curriculum over recent years, the overwhelming opinion of teachers, Heads of Department, Governors and parents appears to be that Specialist Schools as a whole concept is not working. The experiences of students are highly variable and very often students' interest is not sustained across three years. Although some exciting things can be achieved, the feeling is that the time could be spent much more effectively teaching in regular lessons. There is also the view that other curriculum areas are unduly squeezed because of the time given to Specialist Schools in Year 7 and most Heads of Department would rather drop the idea. However, there is an appetite for some element of specialisation during KS3 and for some curriculum elements to allow extended collaborative learning.

The proposal is to remove all Specialist Schools except Music School which is overwhelmingly seen as a strength and a defining feature of Highbury Grove. See Key Stage 3 Options.

Music Specialism

In order to capitalise on the unique and significant opportunities presented by the Music in Secondary Schools Trust programme, music will be strengthened as a core subject for all students at KS3, with two lessons per week for all in Year 7 and 8. Core Music will link to an extended-day Music School and Saturday School sessions to allow the elements of Music Specialist School to be retained consistently across KS3. There will be a Music School option in Year 9 and GCSE Music and enrichment at KS4. Additional individual instrumental tuition can run across the timetable as at present.

Business and Enterprise

This specialism is not embedded deeply enough in practice to warrant being part of the school tag-line and the proposal is to drop it. Business is a strong area in the curriculum as an option at KS4 and in the Sixth Form and could be included in the form of Young Enterprise as a Year 9 Option and Enrichment activity.

PE Time

The recommended minimum time allocation for PE and Games is 2 hours so we have ensured that a minimum of 2 hours per week is embedded across all year groups. (Currently we do not meet that requirement.) The five-hour day will make this a straight-forward double lesson per week for all at KS3-KS4. We also plan to strengthen the staffing of Girls' PE to ensure girls' opportunities are on a par with those given to boys.

Provision of Personal, Social and Health Education.

The importance of a strong PSHE programme is beyond debate. Drop-down days are not adequate for the range of issues we need to tackle. The best-fit model, taking account of timetable constraints is to have a whole-school hour per week where all tutor groups have PSHE simultaneously. This will allow some sessions to be run by form tutors, presentations to be delivered to whole year groups and other lessons to be delivered by specialist teams within the staff on a carousel – e.g. with Sex and Relationships Education and Careers.

Humanities Carousel at KS3

Humanities subjects have had relatively low status in the school compared to their vital importance in a broad curriculum. Our analysis is that this is due to a) the carousel arrangements, fragmenting learning of each discipline over time and b) the extent of non-specialist teaching. The proposal is for all students to be taught separately for History, Geography and RE with specialist teachers to the greatest extent possible. The total time will remain the same – simply because of other demands on time – but the structure will give each subject far greater status, reinforced by a compulsory Humanities Option at KS4 for all.

Computing/IT

Currently, access to dedicated IT teaching is limited to some bands within KS3. It is now untenable for a modern school not to teach computing and not only because it is a requirement of the National Curriculum. We will introduce core Computing lessons for all, with a computing-based curriculum in Year 7 and 8. In Year 9, KS4 and KS5 Computing will be an option for those wishing to pursue it further. Better provision of wireless devices across the school will allow IT applications to be used more extensively across the curriculum.

Languages Provision

Learning a modern language is an important principle in developing global citizenship. Given the low level of exposure students have to modern languages in England, it is difficult to develop skills in all areas – reading, writing, listening and especially speaking – in less than three taught hours per week. Anything less is a recipe for mediocrity. Our proposal is to make French the core language taught in three hours per week for all throughout KS3. A second language can be taken as one of the two Year 9 Options and at KS4. Currently this would be Spanish and Latin; it would be a requirement to begin in Year 9 in order to pursue these options at KS4. Other languages such as Mandarin could be introduced over time. Ultimately we will move to a 'Languages for All' policy at KS4. Niche language clubs could be offered in Enrichment time for students in Year 8 and above.

The Art/DT Carousel in Y7 and 8.

The provision of DT and Food Tech are limited by the physical facilities in the school. Art remains an important and strong area throughout the school. The current carousel gives students a good grounding across these areas and we propose to maintain the structure but with six groups from four classes. This will allow six six-week rotations with four Art, one DT and one Food Tech (or catering)

each with two hours per week. This way all students will gain access to the catering room in Year 7 and again in Year 8. See below for the Year 9 model.

Options at KS3

In order to have a place in the curriculum for genuine choice and some innovative course planning, there will be two option blocks in Year 9. These may be pre-GCSE courses as in Spanish and Latin, or they may be opportunities to focus on one particular arts area – Music, Drama or Art. Other options will include DT, Catering and Computing and possible Business/Young Enterprise courses. Other unique cross-curricular courses could be introduced over time. The aim is for at least one course to be arts based in order to maintain breadth. Timetabling will mean that not all combinations are possible but we will model the best fit based on student preferences. (NB: Many schools run a two-year KS3 with Year 9 as a full-on GCSE year; it is not unusual for Year 9 to be a year where some KS3 subjects are no longer pursued in order for students to specialise.)

Enrichment

Currently there is a wide offer with some areas of significant strength. However there is concern that the Friday afternoon slot does not advantage students who are not engaged or those who would benefit from more core teaching, especially at KS4. If we made Friday enrichment compulsory we would struggle to provide activities of choice for all students simultaneously. The proposal is to move all enrichment to the 3.30-4.30 slot after school, Monday to Friday, and to Saturday mornings. All students would be required to select at least one activity as part of their timetabled hours, with options to rotate termly or sustain some activities. This would maintain the culture of enrichment, with numerous opportunities for students to work in vertical age groups. Study support would be included in this structure as one option. Sessions would appear on timetables with registers taken just like other lessons including where students choose a Saturday session instead of a weekday session. The range of activities will depend on funding but the goal is to provide something for everyone.

'Baccalaureate for All' at KS4.

The KS4 model is based on the concept that all students should take a humanities course, an arts course and a language – once they've had the grounding of the three-hour MFL programme at KS3. These blocks may include vocational courses alongside GCSEs. A fourth block will also allow students to study two languages, two humanities or two arts subjects. It's a broad entitlement built on the philosophy that this combination is appropriate for all students if we are serious about raising aspirations and building cultural capital for all. Our 'Ebacc' includes Arts on a par with Humanities and Languages. The core provision ensures that all students will have at least 8 GCSE entries with options to study 11 GCSEs with triple Science, Maths and Statistics and two English qualifications.

Sixth Form Provision

The key proposal for the Sixth Form is to introduce a Baccalaureate style model, implementing the National Baccalaureate that we've been developing in partnership with other organizations.

This comprises core learning with A levels and BTECs as now; the Extended Project Qualification and a Personal Development Programme planned for each student with a requirement to log 150 hours of activity across Year 12 and 13. The choice of A levels will be open and we will reset the blocks each year to maximize the permutations that fit students' preferences taken from an annual survey of Year 11.

This will require timetabled provision of EPQ guidance and PDP time.

Additional A levels for 2015 will include Sociology and Computing alongside our current offer.

Appendix 1: The Proposed Curriculum Model for 2015

Curriculum Proposal

Hours per Two-week Cycle

	Year 7	Year 8		Year 9
Maths	6	6	Maths	6
Science	6	6	Science	7
English	6	6	English	6
History	3	3	History	3
Geography	3	3	Geography	3
French	6	6	French	6
Music	4	4	Music	3
PE	4	4	PE	4
IT/Computing	2	2	IT	0
RE	2	2	RE	2
PSHE	2	2	PSHE	2
ADT	4	4	1st Option	4
Drama	2	2	2nd Option	4
Enrichment	2	2	Enrichment	2
<i>Music School</i>	2*	2*		
	52	52		52

Music School

An additional session after school on same day as double music.

Options: Two choices.

Including at least one Arts
Art, Drama, Music School, DT, Catering, Business, Computing, Latin, Spanish, Other possible additions

Enrichment

Minimum 1 hour per week timetabled for all students from Junior, Senior Academy or Saturday School.

	Year 10	Y11		Year 12	Year 13
Maths	7	6	Block A	10	10
Science	9	10	Block B	10	10
English	8	8	Block C	10	10
PE	4	4	Block D	10	10
PSHE	2	2	EPQ	2	2
MFL Option	5	5	PSHE	2	2
Humanities Option	5	5	Personal	2	2
Arts Option	5	5	Development		
4th Option	5	5	Study	4	4
Enrichment	2	2			
	52	52		50	50

Appendix 2 Proposal for the Timing of the Day

The key components of the new proposal are as follows:

- 25 one-hour lessons – run on a two-week timetable. (Actually 22 hour lessons and three 55 min lessons to accommodate a reading period as in the current model).
- One common lunch of one hour.
- No afternoon registration.
- All days with five lessons, Monday to Friday.

The rationale for the proposal is as follows:

The **25 hour lessons** are needed to deliver the 50 hour curriculum model. The 1-2-2 split spreads the time across the day in the most equal way, taking account of morning registration. (A 2-1-2 model is also being considered.)

The **single lunch hour** would deliver significant benefits although, two sittings would be needed within the hour to organise the flow of students:

- No lessons taking place during lunch – or lunch during lessons!
- A school focus on supervision during lunch, without needing to worry about lessons.
- The possibility for activities to be run by staff and students during lunch.
- A common lunch for all allowing social interaction and joint activities across all years
- A full hour lunch break for staff not involved in supervision.

Removing PM Registration would be possible if Lesson 5 becomes the default pm registration point. This has several benefits:

- Removes a highly inefficient movement period in the current model. The energy used for 1200 people to move around the building for 10 minutes of tutor time isn't justifiable.
- Removes 40 minutes of workload from every tutor that they can direct into their teaching and learning activities.
- Gives teaching staff the option/opportunity to keep students behind for discussions about their work after lesson 5.

Proposed Timing of the Day

	Monday - Thursday	
8.45	Registration/Assemblies	
9.05	Lesson 1	Friday
10.05	Break	
10.25	Lesson 2	Reading Period created by reducing
11.25	Lesson 3	Lesson 1– 3 to 55 minutes.
12.25	Lunch	Two sittings
1.25	Lesson 4	
2.25	Lesson 5	
3.25	End of School	
3.30	Enrichment Hour Begins.	

An alternative configuration where Lesson 2 is before break is also under consideration.