

The Royal School, Armagh



Curriculum Policy

March 2025

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1. ETHOS AND RATIONALE

The curriculum at the Royal School, Armagh includes all planned activities which it offers in order to ensure its pupils are supported, developed, and equipped with the skills to thrive and feel successful in an ever changing and demanding world.

In its wholeness the school curriculum at the Royal School, Armagh aims to ensure pupils reach their full potential in academic, social, moral, and spiritual terms.

The mission statement of the Royal School Armagh says: The ethos of the Royal School Armagh informs and flows from the mission statement. It prioritises the significance of the individual. This Curriculum Policy shall be read, interpreted, and updated in a manner consistent with the ethos and mission of the Royal School Armagh.

2. AIMS

In keeping with the aims and objectives of the Northern Ireland Curriculum all pupils at the Royal School, Armagh have access to a broad, balanced, knowledge rich and relevant curriculum. It is focused on providing continuity and progression which:

- (a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society
- (b) prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life.

The delivery of the curriculum will in general terms aim to:

- help pupils think clearly, creatively and critically.
- foster a desire to learn.
- encourage a sense of self-esteem.
- cultivate within pupils the motivation to apply themselves to worthwhile and satisfying activities.
- encourage pupils to express themselves confidently in both oral and written work.

The school ethos and mission focus on the importance of care for the individual and this policy should be read, interpreted, and applied in a manner consistent with the ethos and mission

The implementation of this curriculum policy will require that there are general principles within the teaching curriculum of every individual subject taught at the school. These principles require the teaching of that subject to be:

- concerned with values and attitudes as well as knowledge and skills.
- practical and build upon the interests and experiences of the pupils.

- designed to encourage children to become independent thinkers and to take responsibility for their own learning.

The curriculum at The Royal School includes not only the formal curriculum requirements but also the range of curricular activities that the school organises to enrich the taught curriculum and the extra curricular activities.

It also encompasses the 'hidden curriculum' - what the pupils learn from the school's behaviour expectations and core values of respect for each other and all members of the school community. In this regard the school aims to teach children how to grow into positive, responsible people, who can work and co-operate with others, whilst developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes to learning, in order that they achieve their true potential.

3. THE CURRICULUM

Its primary purpose is to cause learning – conceptual understanding, competencies and character traits.

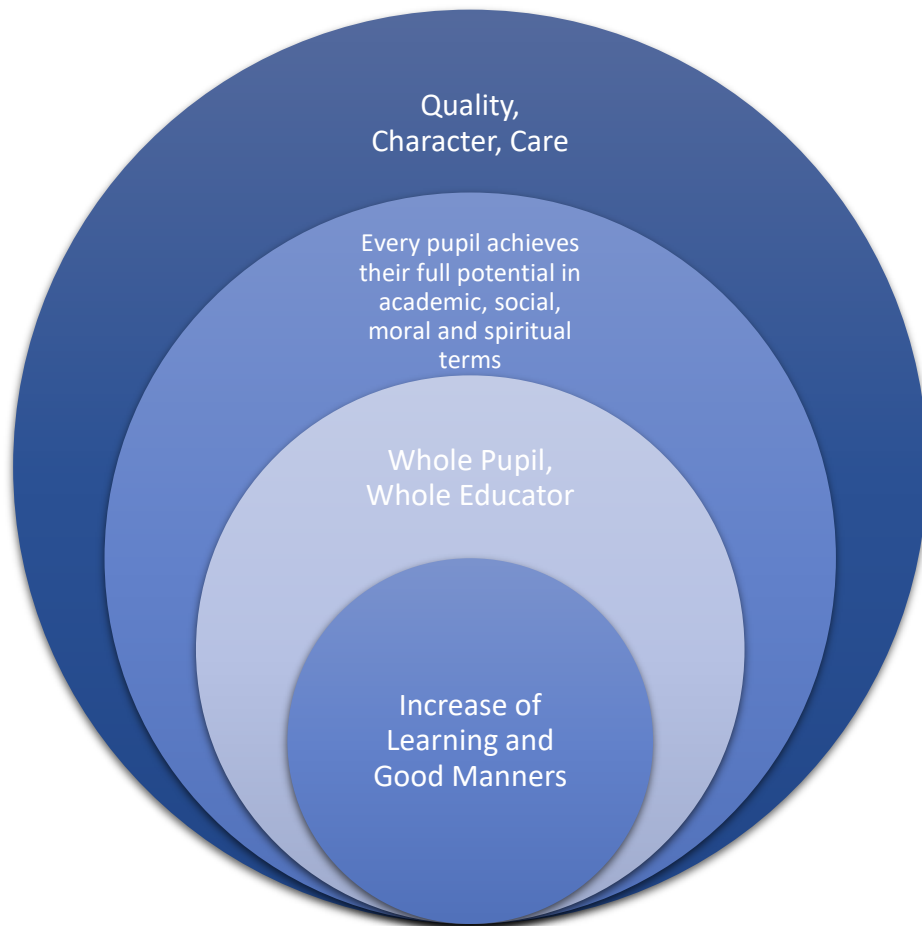
In designing the curriculum, the Royal School asks key questions:

- What: What do we want pupils to know and be like?
- Whether: How will we know whether they are making progress?
- How: How will we get them to where they need to be?
- Who: Who is our curriculum constructed for? Who are our pupils in the Royal School of Armagh in terms of what makes them similar or different including language, culture, previous learning, achievement levels.
- Why: What is our schools driving purpose?



'There is more in us than we know if we could be made to see it; perhaps, for the rest of our lives we will be unwilling to settle for less' Kurt Hahn

Steps to achieving Quality, Care and Character.



The Knowledge Rich Curriculum

We promote a knowledge rich curriculum, which may be defined as one in which curriculum leaders are clear on the invaluable knowledge they want their pupils to know. We view subject knowledge as important and empowering. A successful knowledge rich curriculum should be designed to help pupils remember what they have been taught, and we will use effective strategies, such as retrieval practice, to help pupils remember subject content.

Pupils need knowledge so they can develop useful skills. The development of skills is essential to enable pupils to take and apply their knowledge in various contexts and connect their knowledge to wider learning. In this way we aspire to prepare our young people for a fulfilling life of learning after school.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Time	
8.50 am	Registration starts
9.00 am	Assembly starts (As per Assembly schedule)
9.10 am - 9.45 am	Period 1
9.45 am - 10.20 am	Period 2
10.20 am - 10.35 am	Break time
10.35 am - 11.10 am	Period 3
11.10 am - 11.45 am	Period 4
11.45 am - 12.20 pm	Period 5
12.20 pm - 12.55 pm	Period 6 (LUNCH 1)
12.55 pm - 1.30 pm	Period 7 (LUNCH 2)
1.30 pm - 2.05 pm	Period 8 (LUNCH 3)
2.05 pm - 2.40 pm	Period 9
2.40 pm - 3.15 pm	Period 10

5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE NI CURRICULUM

The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims:

to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions through their lives.

Objectives

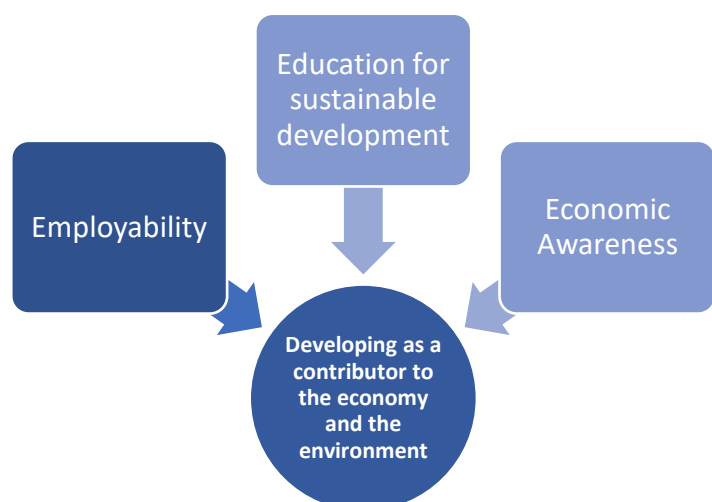
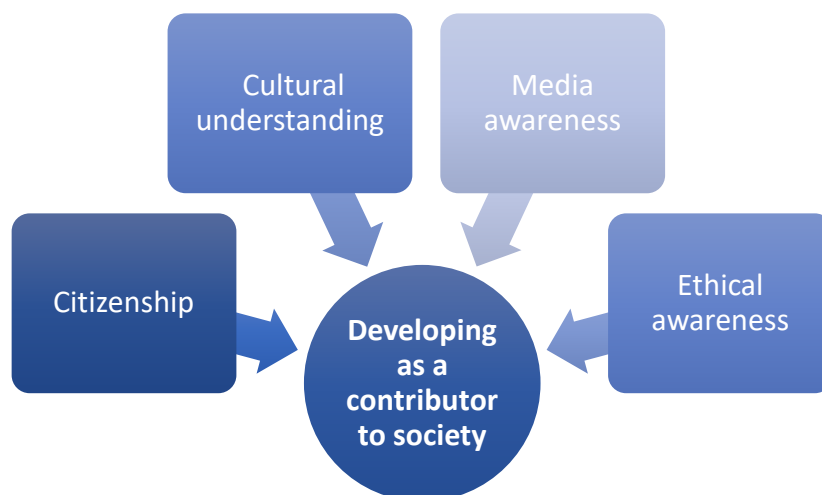
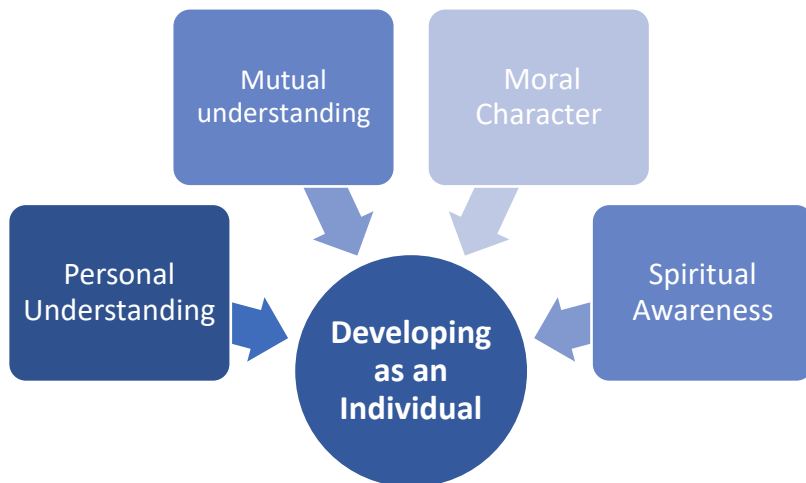
The Northern Ireland Curriculum should provide learning opportunities for each young person to develop as:

1. an individual to achieve personal fulfilment and individual well-being through living a successful life.
2. a contributor to society to be concerned for the well-being of others as well as themselves, in their own society and beyond it.
3. a contributor to the economy and the environment to appreciate how employment will impact on the economic choices they make and how they, in turn, impact individually and collectively on the environment.

There are key elements relating to each curriculum objective which can be highlighted through various subjects across the curriculum.

These Key areas are:

1. Developing as an individual
2. Developing as a contributor to society
3. Developing as a contributor to the economy and the environment



These key elements are also addressed through the **Preventative Curriculum**.

Our Preventative Education Programme equips pupils with the knowledge, skills, and resilience to thrive in today's complex world. Developed over several years, it aligns closely with the core objectives of the school's vision. Through thoughtfully designed lessons, workshops, and assemblies, delivered by Learning for Life and Work staff and external partners, we ensure that every pupil understands their role in fostering an environment where they feel "welcome, safe, and happy." The programme also highlights vital support networks tailored to each pupil's age and stage of development.

Our Preventative Education Programme includes:

- Mental Health Awareness Programmes
- Love for Life Workshops
- Healthy Relationships Programme;
- Internet Safety
- Study Skills Workshop – delivered
- Alcohol and Drug Awareness Programmes
- CPR Training (RSA is a Restart a Heart School)
- Road Safety Programme
- Anti-Bullying Programme
- Period dignity programme
- Consent awareness
- Community of Lifesavers Programme for all KS3 students

Assessment and Differentiation

Each department will adhere to the principles and practices laid down in the Assessment Policy for the School. This policy promotes the implementation of strategies within the classroom to support pupils' individual needs.

Pupil Progress and Assessment

There are regular and notified internal assessments throughout the academic year, the outcomes of which are reported to parents/carers/guardians

Regular formative assessment and pupil self-evaluation allows our pupils to have agency over their learning and progress. Targets are set according to CAT4 baseline data.

Data Collection

The school values and promotes the collection and effective use of pupil data in order to understand and use it to make informed and evidence-based decisions about pupil progress and to provide suitable intervention strategies to meet its pupil's individual needs.

Organisation of the Curriculum

The organisation of the school timetable and the amount of time allocated will endeavour to keep a balance across the curriculum so that all pupils will have a “balanced” learning experience.

Key Stage Three

The curriculum covers all the main areas of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (The Arts, Language and Literacy, Mathematics and Numeracy, Modern Languages, Environment and Society, Science and Technology, Learning for Life and Work & Religious Education).

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities are infused throughout the Key Stage Three Curriculum and are key for helping young learners prepare for their future:

- Managing Information
- Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Being Creative
- Working with others
- Self-management

To develop pupils’ Personal Capabilities, teachers create opportunities for them to:

- Experiment with ideas
- Take initiative
- Learn from mistakes
- Work collaboratively
- Become more self-directed in their learning

Cross Curricular Skills of Using Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT are accommodated within the KS3 curriculum by the provision of planned, meaningful learning opportunities.

Learning for Life and Work (LLW)

At KS3 the Learning for Life and Work Curriculum is comprised of the following sections:

- Local and Global Citizenship,
- Personal Development, and
- Employability.

In Year 8, this takes the form of two 35-minute periods a week and in Year 9, one 35-minute period per week. In Year 10, due to timetabling constraints, the provision takes the form of a special 'suspended timetable' LLW days which incorporate visits from relevant outside agencies and sessions. LLW 'aims to bring closer links between the curriculum and the knowledge, skills and capabilities that are necessary for life and work', with a particular focus on developing young people as individuals. Pupils have opportunities to explore a range of topics which fall under three main branches:

- self-awareness,
- personal health, and
- relationships.

Curriculum Allocation

The exact period allocation may vary from year to year, but the allocation shown here is indicative of the allocation to each year group

Year 8

Curriculum Area	Subject	Number of periods per week
Language and Literacy	English	5
Mathematics and numeracy	Maths	5
Modern Languages	French	5
The Arts	Art	2
	Music	2
Environment and Society	Geography	3
	History	3
Science and Technology	Science	5
	Technology	2
Physical Education	PE	2
	Games	3
Learning for Life and Work	Home Economics	2
	LLW	2
Religious Studies	RS	2
ICT	ICT	2

Year 9

Curriculum Area	Subject	Number of periods per week
Language and Literacy	English	5
Mathematics and numeracy	Maths	5
Modern Languages	French	3
	Spanish	3
The Arts	Art	2
	Music	2
Environment and Society	Geography	3
	History	3
Science and Technology	Science	5
	Technology	2
Physical Education	PE	2
	Games	3
Learning for Life and Work	Home Economics	2
	LLW	1
Religious Studies	RS	2
ICT	ICT	2

Year 10

Curriculum Area	Subject	Number of periods per week
Language and Literacy	English	5
Mathematics and numeracy	Maths	5
Modern Languages	French/Spanish	Depends on pupil choice: either 6 periods of French or 3 periods of French, 3 periods of Spanish
The Arts	Art	2
	Music	2
Environment and Society	Geography	3
	History	3
Science and Technology	Science	6
	Technology	2
Physical Education	PE	2
	Games	3
Learning for Life and Work	Home Economics	2
Religious Studies	RS	2
ICT	ICT	2

Key Stage Four and Five

In Years 11 – 14 pupils are given the opportunity to select a certain combination of courses that suit their individual requirements. The school will do its utmost to satisfy the requests. However, due to timetabling constraints, staffing levels, resources and requirements of other pupils, it may not always be possible to meet all demands fully.

Key Stage Four

Pupils choose GCSE subjects within a framework of a 'broad and balanced curriculum'.

We aim to give each pupil:

- a meaningful learning experience.
- a basis for choosing A level subjects suited to their capabilities and aspirations.

Pupils have three options from which to choose:

- 9 GCSEs: English Language, Mathematics and Religious Studies
- 10 GCSEs: English Language, Mathematics, Religious Studies and English Literature
- 10 GCSEs: English Language, Mathematics, Religious Studies and Further Mathematics

The extra time that is gained by studying 9 GCSEs is used for additional Mathematics and English lessons to help maximise pupil outcomes in these key subjects.

Pupils have the option to study either Double Award Science or a minimum of one discrete science subject. Double Award Science provides a broad foundation across Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, resulting in two GCSE qualifications and keeping future study and career pathways open, particularly in STEM fields. Alternatively, pupils who have a strong preference for a specific science can opt to study a minimum of one Science, allowing them to focus on their area of interest while maintaining a balanced curriculum. This flexibility ensures that pupils can tailor their studies to suit their academic strengths and future aspirations.

Due to the nature of the Science subjects class sizes are limited. If a class is over-subscribed, eligibility will be determined by a pupil's performance based on the end of year examinations and career aspirations.

Learning for Life and Work (LLW)

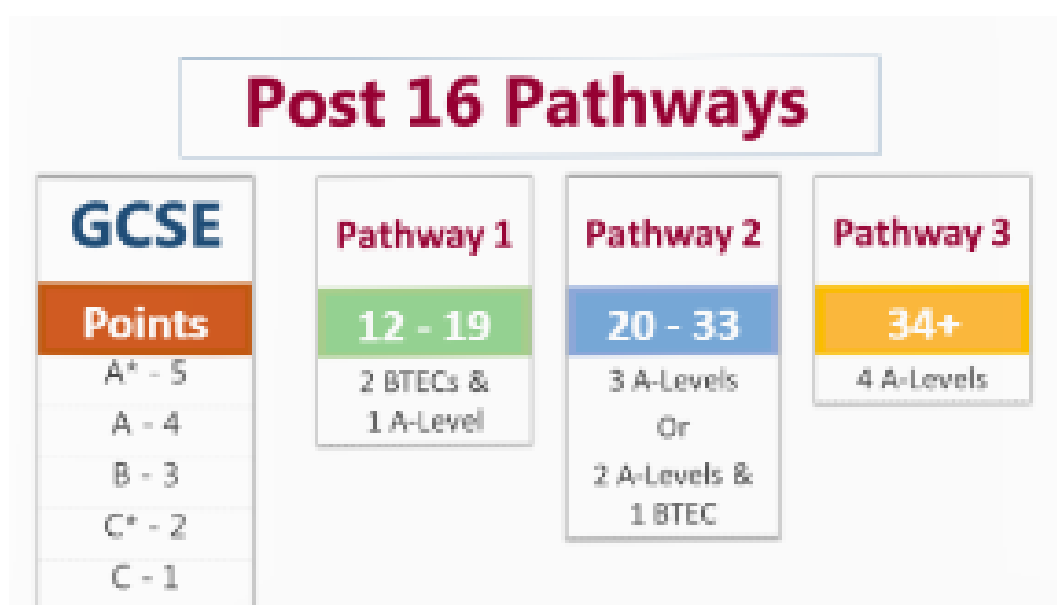
Learning for Life and Work (LLW) at Key Stage 4 builds on the foundation established at Key Stage 3, ensuring that pupils continue to develop crucial skills and understanding in three key areas: Employability, Local and Global Citizenship, and Personal Development. These strands equip pupils with practical life skills, critical thinking abilities, and a sense of social responsibility as they prepare for their futures in both personal and professional contexts.

In Year 11, LLW is delivered as part of a carousel model, where pupils rotate between each of the three subject strands approximately every 9 weeks. This rotation ensures that pupils engage with each area in-depth, allowing them to reflect on their learning and apply it across a variety of scenarios.

Key Stage Five

There are three distinct pathways determined by GCSE performance. A points total is calculated based on the pupil GCSE performance. This allows for individual pathway guidance interviews to take place on results day.

The aim of the pathways is not to prohibit choice, but to provide the best opportunity for the success of each pupil. The points awarded are as follows: A* = 5 points; A = 4 points; B = 3 points; C* = 2 points; C = 1 point.



If a particular subject is over-subscribed, the school will use its assessment of the pupil's ability to provide the basis for advising a pupil (and his/her parent or guardian) in relation to a subject choice. In the event of a difference of opinion between staff and the parent or guardian in the matter of subject choice, the school's decision will prevail. The viability of a course will be considered when deciding whether or not to offer it in a particular year.

In some A-Level subjects, teaching is shared between two teachers within the school. This approach provides several key benefits:

- **Depth and Specialism** – Each teacher can focus on specific areas of the curriculum, ensuring pupils benefit from specialist knowledge in different aspects of the subject.
- **Greater Continuity in Learning** – If one teacher is absent, the other can provide continuity, minimising disruption and ensuring steady progress.

6. CAREERS INFORMATION ADVICE AND GUIDANCE (CEIAG)

The school is fortunate to have a proficient careers and guidance service to assist with decisions about Higher Education and employment. There are Employability classes as part of “Learning for Life and Work” in KS3. In **Year 8 and 9** pupils have access to the following topics:

- The basics of employability
- Developing skills for employment
- Future proof employment
- The fundamentals of entrepreneurship

In **Year 11** pupils have Employability/Careers in the carousel covering the following topics:

- Career clusters
- Personal career planning
- Possible pathways, Post-16
- Choosing subjects wisely
- Preparing for employment

In Years 11 – 14 there are interviews dealing with careers advice, as well as access to individual careers teachers. Additionally, Year 12 pupils have one to one interviews with a representative of the careers service

Every pupil in Year 13 is invited to participate in “Work Experience”. Pupils are required to organise placement themselves and assistance is given by the school with regard to insurance and advice. Year 14 pupils have designated “UCAS Advisers” to help with the process of applications for Higher Education and Higher-Level Apprenticeships. Pupils applying for courses which require interviews will have the opportunity of focused interview preparation.

7. ARMAGH LEARNING COMMUNITY

The Armagh Learning Community (involving the Royal School, St Patricks Grammar School, Markethill High School, Lisnally Special School, St Catherine’s College, St Patricks High School Keady, Southern Regional College and the City of Armagh High School) allows pupils to collaborate over a variety of events to share the teaching of some subjects such as GCSE, A Level and BTEC Subjects, Literacy and Numeracy Events, Sporting Events, Media Based Projects, and School Leadership Professional Development. These local partnerships between schools in different sections have the objective of providing enhanced educational outcomes for all young people through collaborative working.