

The Curriculum

St Julie – “Teach them what they need to know for life”

At the heart of our curriculum is the belief that every student is a child of God, uniquely created and called to grow in wisdom, knowledge, and faith. Rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church and inspired by the example of Christ, our curriculum seeks to nurture the whole person – spiritually, morally, intellectually, and socially – preparing students not only for academic success but also for a life of purpose, service, and integrity.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to providing a curriculum that is ambitious, inclusive, and deeply grounded in Gospel values. It is designed to develop students who are thoughtful, compassionate, and resilient, with a strong sense of justice and a commitment to the common good. We aim to cultivate a lifelong love of learning and to encourage our students to become reflective individuals who contribute positively to the world around them.

In line with the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales’ guidance, 10% of curriculum time is devoted to Religious Education, ensuring that it is a rigorous and academically respected subject. RE is central to our mission, providing students with a deep understanding of Catholic theology, scripture, and moral teaching, while also fostering respect and dialogue with other faiths and world views

Our curriculum is designed to be broad, balanced, and ambitious, with the belief that each subject adds something to the formation of the whole person. Students complete KS3 in the foundation subjects over a two-year period in Year 7 and Year 8. Towards the end of Year 8, we begin the ‘options process,’ and in Key Stage 4 students have increased choice over the subjects they study.

In addition to our core subjects in Key Stage 4 (English, Maths, Science, RE and MFL), students choose two option subjects to study over three years (which we term ‘Long-thin’) and one option subject to study more intensively over two years in Years 9 and 10 (‘Mid-size’). The exam for this mid-size subject is taken a year earlier than the others, in Y10. The organisation of our option blocks for Key Stage 4 increases the breadth of study available to students and ensures that all students have access to the full breadth of subjects on offer at Notre Dame. Following the principle of subsidiarity, we want all students to have the freedom to choose their option choices, with the same curriculum offer, open to all.

Key Stage 3 Curriculum

During this Key Stage all students follow a broadly common course of study in line with the National Curriculum and have an entitlement to:

- Religious Education
- Mathematics
- English
- Science
- A Modern Foreign Language (French or Spanish)
- History
- Geography
- Design and Technology
- Art
- Music
- Drama

- Physical Education
- PSHE

The number of lessons per subject each week is:

Y7	EN	EN	EN	MA	MA	MA	SC	SC	SC	RE	RE	RE	MF	MF	GG	GG	HI	HI	TE	MU	AR	IT	DR	PE	PE
Y8	EN	EN	EN	MA	MA	MA	SC	SC	SC	RE	RE	RE	MF	MF	GG	GG	HI	HI	TE	MU	AR	IT	DR	PE	PE

10% of our KS3 curriculum time is dedicated to Religious Education in line with the requirements of Bishops of England and Wales. Every two weeks the students have 1 hour of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) which is delivered by the student's RE teacher. Students' religious education and PSHE are also supported through form time and the assembly programme, as well as through our enrichment days and the wider curriculum offered through other foundation subjects.

Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) are delivered within core curriculum time, form time, assemblies and Enrichment Days.

The Aspire Programme

A small number of students are on our 'Aspire' programme. This is a bespoke programme that runs in Key Stage 3 and also continues into Y9 (to support transition into Key Stage 4) to support those students who have lower reading ages or significant additional needs, with the aim of helping them to gain confidence and to further develop their literacy and language skills. On this programme students study one hour a week of MFL (rather than two) and they also have an additional half-hour of literacy interventions and half an hour of life-skills. In Year 9 they have two hours of MFL (instead of three) alongside the literacy and life-skills. Students are identified early in Y7 and parents are contacted and given the choice of the Aspire Programme for their child.

Through this programme these students are able to study a modern foreign language with the focus on key vocabulary and phrases and less on the grammar and accuracy of written language. Students maintain their enjoyment of language learning, feel successful and motivated in their study of another language and build crucial oracy and language skills. The programme also aims to develop students' cultural knowledge and to give them a solid knowledge of communicative language that they will be able to use in future travel or work. The emphasis is on building confidence, enjoyment and a sense of success. There are no tests and no homework. The course sits alongside the mainstream KS3 MFL curriculum, and therefore students can move back to their original MFL class when or if it is felt appropriate to do so.

In the literacy component of this programme students benefit from small-group interventions and more targeted and specific support, delivered by English teachers, which helps to support them in all areas of their learning. The life-skills sessions then support the students in their self-confidence, relationships and other areas of life where additional time and support can support the students to really "know what they need for life".

The Options Process

During Y8 students have the opportunity to choose some of the courses they would like to study for Key Stage 4. High quality advice and guidance on how to choose subjects is given and decisions are made by students, parents and staff working together to ensure the best choices for each individual.

We start our options process in Y8 to give students greater choice over their GCSE choices and to allow them to study a broader curriculum, including one subject for examination in Y10. This early GCSE examination supports students in developing key study and exam skills as well as gaining confidence and experience in how to revise prepare for and sit an examination.

The options process starts with a series of taster sessions in early January where students can experience those subjects that they have not studied before. This is followed by a parents' options information evening in February. We then have Y8 parents' evening in March, and after this the options form is sent to students for completion before the end of the Spring term.

Key Stage 4 Curriculum

Students follow a common core leading to examination in:

- Religious Education
- English Language and English Literature
- Mathematics
- Double award Science (Triple award can be taken by electing to take it as the long thin option choice).
- French or Spanish - All students study MFL throughout KS4 but a very small number (those from the Y7 to 9 Aspire Programme) do not study for or take an exam.
- The three chosen option subjects

Core Subjects	Options
English Literature = 1 GCSE	1 = 1 GCSE (or equivalent)
English Language = 1 GCSE	2 = 1 GCSE (or equivalent)
Maths = 1 GCSE	3 = 1 GCSE (or equivalent)
Double Science = 2 GCSEs	
Religious Education = 1 GCSE	
Modern Foreign Language = 1 GCSE	

All students also follow a non-examined programme of Physical Education.

The number of lessons per subject per week is:

Y9	EN	EN	EN	MA	MA	MA	SC	SC	SC	SC	RE	RE	RE	MF	MF	MF	LT2	LT2	MS1	MS1	MS1	LT	LT	PE	PE
Y10	EN	EN	EN	EN	MA	MA	MA	SC	SC	SC	SC	RE	RE	RE	MF	MF	LT2	LT2	MS1	MS1	MS1	LT	LT	PE	PE
Y11	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	SC	SC	SC	SC	RE	RE	RE	MF	MF	MF	LT2	LT2	LT	LT	PE

Our option subjects are:

- Art and Design (GCSE)
- Business Studies (GCSE)
- Computer Science (GCSE)
- Child Development (NCFE CACE Level 1-2 Technical Award)
- Dance (GCSE)
- Drama (GCSE)
- Food & Nutrition (GCSE)
- Geography (GCSE)
- History (GCSE)
- Health and Social Care (NCFE CACE Level 1-2 Technical Award)
- i-Media (Cambridge National Creative Level 2)
- Music (GCSE)
- Photography (GCSE)
- Physical Education (GCSE)
- Technology –Product Design (GCSE)
- Triple Science (GCSE)

10% of our KS4 curriculum time is dedicated to Religious Education in line with the requirements of Bishops of England and Wales. Every two weeks the students have 1 hour of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) which is delivered by the student’s RE teacher. Students’ Religious Education and PSHE are also supported through form time and the assembly programme, as well as through our enrichment days and the wider curriculum offered though other foundation subjects.

Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) are delivered within core curriculum time, form time, assemblies and Enrichment Days. Considerable resources are put towards supporting students making decisions about post 16 study or training- our philosophy of education is about ‘educating for life’.

The Aspire Programme continues into Y9 for those students who were on this programme in KS3. In Years 10 and 11 this time becomes allocated wholly to MFL although these students do not study for an exam in the subject.

Physical Education

Core Physical Education is taught from Years 7 to 11. GCSE and A-Level PE are also both available. Activities cover the full range of traditional sports for both girls and boys including football, rugby, cricket, netball, tennis, rounders, volleyball, athletics, badminton, trampoline, cross country running, gymnastics, basketball, dance and hockey. Students in Y7 to 10 receive two hours of timetable Physical Education each week. Starting in 2026 students in Y11 will have one hour of Physical Education.

Students may be taught in the gymnasium, hall, outdoors, on our 4G astro turf facility or in our well-equipped sports hall. We offer a wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, including ski club, netball, football, rounders, athletics and hockey. Students from Notre Dame win a variety of awards each year.

Key Stage 5 Curriculum

The KS5 curriculum is designed to enable first class progression routes built around students' needs. Our offer is largely A-Level based, with most students studying three subjects for final examination.

Additionally, all students attend an hour of Core RE each week, this amounts to 5% of their timetable in line with the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. These lessons are designed to give students an understanding of the Catholic faith and how it impacts their worldview overall. This is enhanced through form time and assemblies where a rich and varied curriculum is delivered in line with our ethos.

Students are also allocated three supervised self-study sessions a week.

Students select from the following courses:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- English Language
- English Literature
- Maths
- Further Maths
- Philosophy and Ethics
- French
- Spanish
- PE
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Health and Social Care
- Business
- Economics
- Drama
- Music

- Art
- Photography
- History
- Geography
- Politics
- Computer Science
- Design and Technology

The vision of ensuring that all students can thrive and that they are educated “for life” starts with a well-considered curriculum model that enhances the experience of students. On our website you can find summaries of each department intent that feeds into the whole school curriculum model intent.

