



## **The Priory School, Hitchin**

***Excellence in education, for every young person, every day***

|                                                                                                                                                                            |              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Name of policy</b>                                                                                                                                                      | Curriculum   |
| <b>Statutory</b>                                                                                                                                                           | No           |
| <b>Date policy was updated</b>                                                                                                                                             | Autumn 2026  |
| <b>Date of next review</b>                                                                                                                                                 | Autumn 2027  |
| <b>Governors committee</b>                                                                                                                                                 | Standards    |
| <b>Member of staff responsible for the policy</b>                                                                                                                          | Faye Nearney |
| <b>Approved by Headteacher for operational implementation on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2026 Pending formal Governing Body ratification on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2026.</b> |              |

# Curriculum Policy

## CURRICULUM INTENT

*“Truly great schools inspire their students to develop an all-encompassing love for learning. They focus both on passing on the learning, values and beliefs of the past and on developing a wide range of skills and aptitudes that they can apply to the world of the future.”* Woods, Macfarlane and McBeath (2018)

The curriculum offer at The Priory School, Hitchin (TPSH) is incredibly broad and shows the value that we place on all areas of learning. Our vision of *‘Excellence in education, for every young person, every day’* inspires us to deliver the best education we possibly can for our students. We spend significant time designing our curriculum offer to support students of all abilities to love their learning and discover the joy, awe, and wonder that a well-designed curriculum can provide.

The curriculum is designed, through relevant, engaging and enjoyable activity, to encourage each student to develop her/his intellectual, physical and personal qualities to the full. The curriculum enables each student to foster character development through a focus on our school values of Resilience, Responsibility and Respect.

Vital to the quality of our curriculum planning and delivery is the deep trust shown in our subject experts. Our school policies for teaching and learning establish principles, but departments are given the autonomy and flexibility to operate in ways that work best for the subject and so best meets the needs of our students. Our middle-leaders direct developments in their own curriculum areas, both in terms of the curriculum itself and how it ensures progression, and in terms of the subject specific pedagogy.

Inspirational extra-curricular opportunities are a feature of our provision at TPSH. Each year we stage ambitious school productions which range from musicals to performances of Shakespeare and involve students in both performance and the technical support. Our staff lead outstanding extra-curricular opportunities for students in all subject areas. We also have a very popular Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme programme. We want our extra-curricular provision to be inclusive and open to all, as well as nurturing particular talents. We strongly believe that personal development is a key aspect of any high-quality school curriculum.

We place great importance on the extra-curricular sport provision for our students. We compete in a wide range of local, district and national competitions. Our sporting facilities are second-to-none with our multiple football and rugby pitches, large 3G pitch, and new netball pitch. We are proud to host a number of local teams who utilise the facilities that we are able to offer.

Our trips and visits programme is also ambitious and broad. We run a number of trips within our curriculum offer that are designed for ALL children, outside of this we also run ski trips, battlefield trips, diving trips, and a music tour. We raise funds to try to ensure that the cost of these visits is not a barrier to participation. Our Enrichment Days also enshrine a foundational entitlement for all students to ensure that by the end of their journey with us, they have had the opportunity to undertake a huge range of personal development opportunities, for example visit a central London Museum, walk across the English countryside with a map, visited a Zoo, watched a theatre production, visited a film studio, and travelled beyond the boundaries of their home town and country. Furthermore, we invest in an excellent Raising Aspirations programme which exposes students to a huge range of external speakers, organisations, and ensures that every child at TPSH undertakes meaningful experiences with employers, including work experience and opportunities designed to inspire and support future career aspirations. We track student engagement in these opportunities to ensure that we can assess the impact of our personal development offer.

We recognise the importance of regular reading by our students to remove the barriers that can be created if students are not taught how to read or how to comprehend words. We have a comprehensive reading programme based on research conducted by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). This is delivered in morning registration which complements the English programme of study and the development of literacy in subject areas.

Our Reading Programme pursues a tiered approach with a universal offering for all students through guided reading in Form Time. This is complemented by reading age screening for all students on entry. Those whose reading age is below that required to access the curriculum, are offered more targeted support such

as being placed upon an accelerated reader programme. Some students are placed in nurture groups within their English lessons, to support their progress.

Recognising that many of our students will progress into the world of work, we also strive to offer a range of experiences and insights into the working world before children leave us at either 16 or 18 years old. Our range of vocational qualifications and work experience offer is testament to our belief that children can learn lots from experiencing a work place during their time at school.

## **CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION**

To achieve our ambitious and aspirational curriculum intent, we implement a number of strategies and expectations at TPSH. These include:

- Promote quality-first and research-led teaching supported by resources such as the Education Endowment Foundation.
- Have high expectations of all students in all areas of school life.
- Encourage students' resilience, self-esteem, and sense of individual purpose.
- Value all students as individuals so that they can achieve their full academic and personal potential.
- Provide an environment to allow students to develop moral and spiritual values.
- Assist students to develop critical abilities, independence of thought, and a lifelong enthusiasm for learning.
- Establish mutual respect between all members of the school community.
- Provide a broad curriculum which values the strengths of each subject/student equally.
- Create a positive, secure and purposeful atmosphere.
- Recognise that mistakes provide a learning opportunity.
- Foster links with parents/carers and the wider community.
- Encourage excellence in every area of school life.
- Embrace the impact of technology on the lives of students today.
- Develop a blended learning approach to learning through the use of Chromebooks and Google classroom, to enhance the learning experience for students.
- Provide an understanding of different ethnic groups, to promote tolerance and equality.
- Support of our Equality and Diversity policy to promote racial harmony through understanding and acceptance of everyone in our school community.
- Promote good oracy in all students.
- Develop the teaching of literacy skills within subject areas.
- Develop the use of AI as a tool to enhance learning.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum to ensure that it is relevant to each cohort of students, within the context of a rapidly changing world that will be inhabited by our students.
- Provision of on-going professional development of all staff promotes challenging and inspiring curriculum delivery.
- Invest staff time and financial resource to ensure that we achieve high-quality delivery and experiences for our students.

### **1.1 Key Stage 3**

The Key Stage 3 curriculum ensures a foundation for a coherent programme of provision that meets the needs of learners and provides a genuine gateway to learning at post-14 and beyond. Timings for each subject are benchmarked annually against other schools using analysis from Herts for Learning (HfL) to ensure that hours allocated to each subject are in line with the majority of other schools. We are proud of the broad and balanced curriculum offer we have at KS3.

- Where it exists for a department, the expectation is that the department will follow the National Curriculum and apply the schools Assessment criteria to judge student progress at KS3 (Life without levels)

- There are two high attaining form groups in Year 8 and 9, one in each half of the year group. The remaining forms are mixed ability. The new Year 7 intake from September 2025 are all mixed ability.
- Setting arrangements – each year group is split into two half year bands. All subjects are taught in mixed ability groups in Year 7 with the exception of Maths. Science and English are set from Year 8 due to the hierarchical nature of the subject content
- Schemes of learning at KS3 show forward planning for the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Links to Raising Aspirations, RSHE and diversity are explicit as are literacy and intent for DA and SEND students.
- Students in KS3 will have the opportunity to learn one language dependent on which half of the year group they are; French or Spanish.
- The school operates an individualised curriculum for identified students to allow them to 'catch up' with their peers. Identified students, in consultation with their parents will be removed from specific subjects to catch up in maths and English. This is overseen by the Learning Support Department.
- RSHE is delivered through a lesson once per fortnight which moves through the timetable so as not to reduce teaching times of other subjects. RSHE delivery is mapped to ensure all aspects of the curriculum are delivered. Further details of RSHE delivery can be found in our RSHE policy.
- Students in Year 7 have a reading assessment to identify if interventions are required to support them. The learning support department identifies the appropriate intervention for each student.
- Oracy is a thread through all areas of the curriculum in all Key Stages. It is modelled by staff and developed by students, so that they are given the tools to become excellent communicators. Students are taught about the importance of the non-verbal features of language. Speaking using standard English, using stress, rhythm, and intonation (prosodic features) as well as an appropriate speed and volume are all important features of oracy that we encourage our students to use across the curriculum.

#### Curriculum menu for KS3 2026 - 2027

| Subject                                  | Year 7 –<br>timing of lessons (hours) | Year 8 –<br>timing of lessons (hours) | Year 9 –<br>timing of lessons (hours) |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| English (one hour of literacy in year 7) | 7                                     | 8                                     | 7                                     |
| Maths                                    | 7                                     | 6                                     | 6                                     |
| Science                                  | 6                                     | 6                                     | 7                                     |
| MFL                                      | 5                                     | 5                                     | 5                                     |
| Tech                                     | 3                                     | 3                                     | 4                                     |
| History                                  | 3                                     | 3                                     | 3                                     |
| Geography                                | 3                                     | 3                                     | 3                                     |
| Self and Society                         | 2                                     | 2                                     | 2                                     |
| Music                                    | 2                                     | 2                                     | 2                                     |
| Art                                      | 3                                     | 3                                     | 3                                     |
| PE                                       | 5                                     | 4 + 1hr TPS Award*                    | 4                                     |
| Computing                                | 3                                     | 3                                     | 3                                     |
| Drama                                    | 1                                     | 1                                     | 1                                     |

\*TPS Award is a precursor for the Duke of Edinburgh award. All students participate in this programme which involves first Aid, outdoor education, volunteering, skill acquisition and physical activity

## 1.2 Key Stage 4 (September 2026)

The Post-14 curriculum at TPSH provides continuity and progression from the breadth of subjects studied at Key Stage 3. In addition to the core curriculum, we offer 21 additional subjects for the students to choose from to study in KS4. The Post 14 curriculum allows students to progress onto relevant Post 16 learning pathways whether at TPSH or with other providers. Students will take at least 5 academic subjects regardless of the learning pathway they are allocated. There are 3 main Learning pathways. For a small number of students an additional pathway will be created based on the specific learning needs of those students. The curriculum ensures a more individualised learning experience where there is equality of opportunity for all to succeed. Students on this pathway still have access to the subjects in the learning pathways but may attend college for one of their option subjects.

All KS4 students follow specifications from the exam boards which adhere to the National Curriculum. For subjects computing and Self and Society, whole school audits are carried out to ensure all aspects of the National Curriculum are still delivered, for example mapping computing across other subjects or cross checking the citizenship delivery meets the NC requirements. In some instances these are delivered as cross curricular themes.

Self and Society is delivered through timetable lessons and enrichment sessions. Research provided by the PSHE Association suggests that delivery of this subject matter through regular, timetabled lessons is best practice. We follow the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus, produced by Hertfordshire SACRE to ensure we fully deliver the required Religious Education curriculum in addition to the requirements of an RSHE (Relationships, Sex, and Health Education) programme. Our model is in line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance issued in July 2025.

### Allocation of learning pathways

Using the prior attainment data available for each year group (KS2/3), CATs data, teacher assessment of suitability and projected GCSE target grades (1-9) students will be allocated a particular learning pathway. Communication with students and parents over the learning pathways will include:

- Familiarisation with subject content through Raising Aspiration lessons and subject taster sessions;
- Y9 Learning pathway evening;
- Y9 parents evening;
- 121 interview with a member of SLT and relevant senior teachers from the Pastoral team to discuss learning pathways.
- Taster sessions and a subject market place

Subjects within the specific learning pathways will have certain criteria attached to them due to the demands of the course. Due to curriculum constraints some subjects will only operate 1 GCSE group and where there are not enough numbers to deliver an economically viable group a subject will not run. The school will have the final say on the allocation of students to specific courses and learning pathways. The school actively promotes MFL study to students, in a drive to move towards meeting the DfE EBacc target, however, we do not have a policy where all students are required to study a language. Students are encouraged to study subjects they will enjoy and achieve well to improve their life chances. Our high expectations of students' means that all subjects are available to all students, with support and guidance in place to ensure students choose the courses for which they are best suited.

### Learning pathway 1

This route offers up to 9 qualifications (including English Language & Literature, Mathematics, double Science and at least one humanity (Geography or History). Students will have up to 3 additional subjects to take dependent on ability and guidance from the school. Students with predicted GCSE target grades of 4 and below would be placed on this learning pathway. The curriculum is further personalised for a few students to participate in an increased flexibility programme which could include alternative provision, AQA unit awards, outdoor education, college courses and work experience. A few students may not study the full number of qualifications on this learning route but we believe this is right for these individual students who have a completely personalised curriculum which allows them to succeed.

## Learning pathway 2

This route offers a maximum of 11 qualifications (including English Language & Literature, Mathematics, triple / double Science and at least one humanity (Geography or History)). Students will have three additional subjects to take. Students with predicted GCSE targets grade of 5 and above would be placed on this learning pathway.

## Learning pathway 3 (Language Pathway)

This route offers a maximum of 11 qualifications (including English Language & Literature, Mathematics, triple / double Science, at least one humanity (Geography or History) and one language (French or Spanish)). Students will have two other subjects to take. Students with predicted GCSE targets of 5 and above, who the school feels are suitable for studying a language based on prior attainment data and work ethic would be placed on this learning pathway.

| Learning pathway 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Learning pathway 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Learning pathway 3 (Ebacc)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Core curriculum to include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English Language</li> <li>English Literature</li> <li>Maths</li> <li>Double Science</li> <li>History and/or Geography</li> <li>Core PE</li> <li>Core Respect and Responsibility</li> <li>Up to 3 additional subjects</li> </ul> | <b>Core curriculum to include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English Language</li> <li>English Literature</li> <li>Maths</li> <li>Double/Triple Science</li> <li>History and/or Geography</li> <li>Core PE</li> <li>Core Respect and Responsibility</li> <li>3 additional subjects</li> </ul> | <b>Core curriculum to include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English Language</li> <li>English Literature</li> <li>Maths</li> <li>Double/Triple Science</li> <li>History and/or Geography</li> <li>French or Spanish</li> <li>Core PE</li> <li>Core Respect and Responsibility</li> <li>2 additional subjects</li> </ul> |

## KS4 curriculum menu 2026 – 2028

| Learning Pathway 1                            |                           |                            | Year 10 allocation of hours (Sept 2026) |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| English Language and Literature (GCSE)        |                           |                            | 7                                       |
| Maths (GCSE)                                  |                           |                            | 7                                       |
| Science (GCSE)                                |                           |                            | 10                                      |
| Humanity (Geography or History) GCSE          |                           |                            | 6                                       |
| Core PE                                       |                           |                            | 4                                       |
| Self and Society                              |                           |                            | 1                                       |
| <b>Up to 3 additional subjects</b>            |                           |                            | 3 x 5                                   |
| College                                       | Food and nutrition        | Music Practice BTEC        |                                         |
| Art GCSE                                      | Film Studies GCSE         | OCR Sport Studies          |                                         |
| Core support 1 * additional English and Maths | Health & Social Care BTEC | Performing Arts BTEC       |                                         |
| Creative Media (Computing department) BTEC    | Media Studies GCSE        | Philosophy and Ethics GCSE |                                         |
| Design and Technology                         | Music * GCSE              | Photography (GCSE)         |                                         |

|              |  |                           |           |
|--------------|--|---------------------------|-----------|
|              |  | Travel and Tourism (BTEC) |           |
| <b>Total</b> |  |                           | <b>50</b> |

| Learning Pathway 2                     |                           |                            | Year 10 allocation of hours (Sept 2026) |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| English Language and Literature (GCSE) |                           |                            | 7                                       |
| Maths (GCSE)                           |                           |                            | 7                                       |
| Science (GCSE)                         |                           |                            | 10                                      |
| Humanity (Geography or History) GCSE   |                           |                            | 6                                       |
| Core PE                                |                           |                            | 4                                       |
| Self and Society                       |                           |                            | 1                                       |
| <b>3 additional subjects</b>           |                           |                            | 3 x 5                                   |
| Art GCSE                               | Health & Social Care BTEC | Psychology* GCSE           |                                         |
| Business Studies GCSE                  | History GCSE              | Sociology* GCSE            |                                         |
| Computer Science* GCSE                 | Media Studies GCSE        | Spanish GCSE               |                                         |
| Creative Computing BTEC                | Music* GCSE               | Sport Studies OCR National |                                         |
| Design and Technology                  | Music Practice BTEC       | Travel and Tourism BTEC    |                                         |
| Film Studies GCSE                      | PE GCSE*                  |                            |                                         |
| Food Preparation and Nutrition GCSE    | Performing Arts BTEC      |                            |                                         |
| French GCSE                            | Philosophy & Ethics GCSE  |                            |                                         |
| <b>Total</b>                           |                           |                            | <b>50</b>                               |

| Learning Pathway 3 (EBacc)                 |                          |                            | Year 10 allocation of hours (Sept 2026) |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| English Language and Literature (GCSE)     |                          |                            | 7                                       |
| Maths (GCSE)                               |                          |                            | 7                                       |
| Science (GCSE)                             |                          |                            | 10                                      |
| Humanity (Geography or History) (GCSE)     |                          |                            | 6                                       |
| <b>Language (French or Spanish) (GCSE)</b> |                          |                            | 5                                       |
| Core PE                                    |                          |                            | 4                                       |
| Core respect and responsibility (CRR)      |                          |                            | 1                                       |
| <b>2 additional subjects</b>               |                          |                            | 2 x 5                                   |
| Art GCSE                                   | Health & Social Care     | Performing Arts BTEC       |                                         |
| Business Studies GCSE                      | History GCSE             | Psychology* GCSE           |                                         |
| Computer Science* GCSE                     | Media Studies GCSE       | Sociology* GCSE            |                                         |
| Creative Computing BTEC                    | Music* GCSE              | Sport Studies OCR National |                                         |
| Design and Technology                      | Music Practice BTEC      | Travel and Tourism BTEC    |                                         |
| Film Studies GCSE                          | PE GCSE*                 |                            |                                         |
| Food Preparation and Nutrition GCSE        | Philosophy & Ethics GCSE |                            |                                         |
| <b>Total</b>                               |                          |                            | <b>50</b>                               |

**Subject with additional criteria needed to study them.**

| <b>Subject</b>    | <b>Criteria</b>           |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Computer Science* | Target grade 5 in Maths   |
| Sociology*        | Target grade 4 in English |
| Psychology*       | Target grade 5 in Science |
| PE GCSE*          | Target grade 5 in Science |
| Music*            | Minimum of grade 2 Music  |

### 1.3 Post 16

The curriculum at Post-16 enables progression of learning from Key Stage 4. The Priory School is a member of the Hitchin Post-16 consortium which allows a greater range of subject opportunities. There are 44 subjects on offer to be studied in the consortium. Post 16 students have option to be taught across three different sites within Hitchin; The Priory School, Hitchin Boys School and Hitchin Girls School. All students participate in a Raising Aspirations programme and receive specific careers guidance through Services for Young People. The advice given to students is broad and balanced and takes into account the requirements of the Baker clause.

We are proud of the quality and breadth of our post-16 curriculum which strives to offer a broad mix of A-Levels and Vocational courses.

#### Learning pathways at Post 16

- **Learning pathway 1** – Students study a blend of vocational and A level subjects over a two year period. In addition, students are expected to complete an EPQ or core maths qualification.
- **Learning pathway 2** – LR2 is a traditional A level course, studied over a two year period. Students are offered the opportunity of studying the EPQ L3 or core maths qualification. Most students will study 3 A Levels which will be examined at the end of Year 13.

| Subjects available to study at KS5 |                         |                                    |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Art and Design                     | Film Studies            | Product Design                     |
| Biology                            | Food and nutrition      | Psychology                         |
| Business                           | French                  | Sociology                          |
| Business and Economics             | Further Maths           | Spanish                            |
| Chemistry                          | Geography               | BTEC Business                      |
| Classical Civilisation             | Government and Politics | BTEC ICT/Cambridge Technical in IT |
| Computer studies                   | History                 | BTEC Music Performance             |
| Core Maths                         | Latin                   | BTEC Sport                         |
| Criminology WJEC                   | Maths                   | BTEC Investigative Science         |
| Drama                              | Media Studies           | BTEC Health and Social             |
| Economics                          | Music                   | BTEC Performing Arts               |
| English Language                   | Philosophy and Ethics   | BTEC Sound Engineering             |
| English Literature                 | Photography             | BTEC Travel and Tourism            |
| English language and literature    | Physical Education      | BTEC Digital Media                 |
| Extended Project Qualification     | Physics                 |                                    |

## **Curriculum impact - Monitoring and Evaluation**

2.1 Governors' Standards Committee review the Curriculum Policy on an annual basis.

2.2 SLT ensure that all curriculum updates are cascaded to colleagues and students and that the learning needs of students take priority through the SEF and SIP.

2.3 Department area review practice and procedures and ensure that the most appropriate specifications are chosen to meet student needs

2.4 SLT and Middle Leaders will monitor the operation of this policy as part of their general monitoring role. The major vehicles for doing so are itemised below.

### **Quality Assurance**

- All teaching staff will be monitored in accordance with procedures outlined in the performance appraisal policy. This can include, learning walks and more formal observations.
- SLT keep clear records of lesson observations, as part of our duty to quality assure education provision at this school and maintain the very highest of standards. Where standards are assessed to fall below the minimum expectation, leaders will be aware of these and address concerns, supporting staff to make improvements.
- Work scrutiny will be carried out regularly by SLT and by departments.
- Marking of work in accordance with the school's marking policy and the use of yellow tracking sheets to ensure students are aware of the progress they are making will be checked as part of the scrutiny.

### **Raising Standards Meetings**

- HODs will meet with the KS4 or KS5 Raising Standards Leader twice a year to look at student progress and interventions

### **Homework on Google Classroom**

- SLT and Heads of Year will monitor use of Google Classroom as part of the quality assurance process.

### **Exam Performance Analysis**

- These will be carried out with the Head and SLT link in October following the summer exam season and In June for Year 10
- A review will also take place following pre-public exam results.
- All teaching staff are expected to be able to use SISRA to analyse the progress of their teaching groups.
- Where there is a concern about the suitability of a course for our students, research will be carried out by the HOD and DHT and suggested alternatives taken to SLT for a decision to be made

### **SLT Link**

- Part of the role of the SLT link meetings is to ensure compliance of the curriculum policy.

### **Curriculum review**

- The curriculum will be reviewed annually to ensure it meets the needs of the students and also any accountability measures.

### **Performance tables**

- Data included in the DfE performance tables changes annually. The curriculum review will ensure that the curriculum at the priory school meets the needs of our learners, whilst at the same time ensuring that the school meets the expectations of the Performance Tables.

### **Governor link visits**

- Governors will visit departments to gain a better understating of the functioning of the school and review progress against the SIP.

### **Associated policies**

|                       |                         |                                        |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Teaching and Learning | Behaviour Leadership    | Equality and Diversity                 |
| SEND                  | Assessment and Feedback | Raising Aspirations                    |
| RSHE                  | Exams Policy            | BTEC policy                            |
| Visiting Speaker      | Teaching and Learning   | Digital online and social media policy |