

Curriculum Overview

Curriculum Vision

The curriculum at Isca Academy is much more than just our lessons. It includes ethos, attitudes relationships and wider opportunities, all of which create our curriculum offer to enrich the life and development of each and every child. Our aim is to provide a broad, balanced and rigorous curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of every child and leaves them well prepared for their future.

Our vision as a school is ***‘to provide high quality education for the children of our community, through both support and challenge, which is tailored to meet the needs of each and every child’*** and our curriculum is our vehicle to accomplish this.

The Five Guiding Principles of our curriculum:

1. Our curriculum develops the ‘whole child’ by providing high quality experiences beyond the classroom.
2. Our curriculum is knowledge rich.
3. Our curriculum is expertly planned and is sequenced to enable students to build their knowledge and skills towards ambitious end-points.
4. Our curriculum promotes a love of reading and closes the vocabulary gap.
5. Our curriculum enables choice and success for all students in the school.

Curriculum Construction

We have spent the last 18 months creating a knowledge rich curriculum so that there is sequential progression towards ambitious end-points. We continue to work in partnership with our colleagues from the Ted Wragg Trust in its ongoing development.

Each Department (subject area) has translated our overarching curriculum vision into a clear **‘Intent’** for the five-year duration of the course.

Developed from the curriculum intention, is the **‘Curriculum Road Map’** detailing what students will learn over the 5 years of study, in each subject.

Developing the whole child

We attach great importance to our teachers being ‘experts’ in their respective subject disciplines. We want our students to have access to the best that has been thought and said, and with this in mind our teachers think carefully about what to teach and how best to teach it. We work within a variety of local and national networks so that our teachers receive excellent continual professional development. We believe it is vitally important that students receive a broad and balanced curriculum so that all future options remain open to them and as a result, we do not narrow the curriculum. Therefore our first 3 years focuses on giving every child the widest experience possible across the foundation subjects.

In Year 9, all students study the core skills associated with the Duke of Edinburgh (Bronze award) as part of their ‘core’ curriculum offer. This has significantly increased the number of students enrolling in the award. We believe this type of award raises students’ aspirations, develops their resilience, enables them to serve their community and opens doors to employment. It also allows them to experience a raft of new and challenging activities and is also great fun!

From Year 10, the curriculum offer is a mixture of both core and optional subjects and is structured to allow for maximum flexibility of choice. We offer a wide variety of courses, which allow students the option to study the Arts, Humanities, Languages, Catering, Sport, Computing, Resistant Materials and much more.

Curriculum Planning

Our curriculum is knowledge rich, cohesive, cumulative and carefully sequenced towards ambitious end-points. It is based on the understanding that students arrive with significant prior knowledge, a foundation that we build upon from day one. By planning with the end in mind, we consider our students' career pathways and aspirations, as well as the context of our local community when making decisions that affect every aspect of their curriculum.

We sequence lessons to build knowledge, skills and understanding to enable students to achieve really well in their subject areas. Our increasingly effective use of Knowledge Organisers in class, as well as at home are enabling students to retrieve information from their long-term memory with growing ease and accuracy. At the heart of our planning and homework system, they synthesise the core knowledge that students must learn in order to be successful across a learning cycle.

The Cycle System

As we progressively move towards a common Trust wide curriculum, with full alignment in the EBacc subjects by 2022, we made the decision in September 2020, to align our teaching, learning and assessment calendar with those of the other trust schools and divide the school year into three cycles of twelve weeks. We will be following our first full teaching and assessment cycle from the Spring Term of 2021.

Week	Cycle
1	Pre-teaching week Context lessons Knowledge Assessments (baseline testing)
2	Lessons as normal
3	<p style="text-align: center;">Core subjects: Mid-cycle assessment window 2 meaningful assessments to be completed during this time</p> <p style="text-align: center;">All other subjects: Mid-cycle assessment window 1 meaningful assessment to be completed during this time</p>
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	Lessons as normal
10	
11	Assessment Week
12	Super Teaching Week

The first lesson of every cycle is a contextual lesson where the teacher outlines what will be covered within the cycle and how it will prepare students for the final assessment / examination in week twelve. A baseline assessment takes place during the first week, which establishes the prior knowledge of each student.

Each cycle comprises of ten teaching weeks during which students cover new topics, each one building on the knowledge of previous learning.

The eleventh week is an assessment week, when all students in years 7-11 complete tests and other assessments in every subject to analyse their strengths and weaknesses in current and previous cycles.

In the twelfth week known as 'super teach week', teachers provide high-quality feedback and re-teach areas that students have struggled with in their assessments.

Promoting Literacy

At Isca Academy, we have a whole school approach to literacy that promotes reading and literacy in all subject areas. Isca Academy is a reading school; every tutor reads the Isca Anthology with their tutees for 20 minutes, four times a week. Every Year 7 and Year 8 student follows the Accelerated Reader programme – designed to promote reading progress in a personalised and enjoyable way.

We are working towards a common language of literacy where key grammatical concepts are taught across the curriculum in order to support students' knowledge of how to write accurately, creatively and academically. Our plans include:

- All teachers explicitly teaching literacy in all their schemes of learning, including specific vocabulary instruction.
- All pieces of extended writing are marked for spelling (sp), punctuation (p) paragraphs (//) and capital letters (c) with the same marking codes being used across all subjects.
- In all lessons, students are encouraged to answer verbal questions in full sentences to help develop their oracy and reasoning skills.

Intervention is offered to students who are below age-related expectations in reading through our Lexia programme, phonics work and/or TRUGs. Every intervention is bespoke to suit our students' needs.

Outside of curriculum time, we provide our students with the opportunity to engage with literacy in a range of extracurricular and community events, including theatre visits, writing competitions, visiting authors, debating, rehearsed public speaking and recitals.

Mathematical Literacy (Numeracy)

At Isca Academy, we believe it is really important that students are fully numerate, able to use numbers and mathematical approaches across the curriculum as well as being confident solving real-life mathematical problems.

At Isca Academy our approach to whole school numeracy:

- Promotes the application of mathematics and develop problem solving skills in all subject areas
- Raises the profile of mathematics across the school
- Raises the aspirations of all our students
- Ensures there is a common language of numeracy where key concepts are taught across the whole curriculum
- Ensures there is a consistent approach to the teaching of particular numerical concepts across the curriculum including
 - Plotting graphs
 - Solving equations
 - Rearranging formula
 - Calculating gradients
 - Isometric drawing
 - Volume of a prism
 - Illustrating data

Outside of curriculum time, we provide our students with the opportunity to engage with numeracy in extracurricular and community events including The UKMT Maths (Team) Challenge and opportunities throughout the year for different year groups to attend mathematics masterclasses with Exeter Maths School (EMS).

Setting rationale

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At Isca Academy, students are predominantly taught in mixed ability classes. Cohorts are grouped into two equal populations, X and Y, and within these populations, they are placed into classes for

each of their subjects. This is most evident in our foundation subjects. We believe this is important so that students are able to mix with a wider range of their peers; exchange ideas and hear different voices.

In Mathematics, students are 'set' based on their academic ability in Mathematics. All students are given the opportunity to access the Maths curriculum at a level suitable for their ability. Therefore, for each year group, the curriculum is differentiated into two tiers: Higher (Set 1 & 2) and Core (Set 3 & 4). Groups are reviewed following cycle assessments to ensure that students are receiving the correct level of support as well as stretch and challenge. The Team Leader liaises with Heads of Year regularly to ensure that all students are in the right learning environment for them.

In English students are initially placed in mixed ability groups, this is to ensure that every child is exposed to high level texts and ideas, and so that they can develop as readers and writers. The English Team will place their students into sets in Year 10 and Year 11. These are not static, they are often reviewed half termly to ensure every student is in the right group for then to succeed.

In Science in Years 7 and 8, students are taught in mixed ability classes. From Year 9 onwards, the majority of students study GCSE Combined Science in mixed ability groups. We invite one group on each half of the year 9 cohort to start preparation for studying GCSE Separate Sciences. The reason for this being that the GCSE Separate Science course covers a greater depth and breadth of scientific content requiring additional groundwork. From Year 10 onwards, GCSE Combined Science students are set into classes based on their tier of entry to allow us to deliver the most appropriate content for them. At this time, we also make firm decisions about which students will continue to study GCSE Separate Sciences. At the end of every cycle some students may be regrouped to ensure they are in the most appropriate class to maximise their progress.

Students who need extra support in English and Maths are quickly identified. Within English, every student at Isca takes the New Group Reading Test (NGRT) biannually so that we know exactly what every student needs. Additional support, where required, is put in place. Specifically in Year 7 and 8, they receive phonics interventions, and focused work on Lexia to close gaps in knowledge, skills and confidence. In Years 7 and 8, students who need extra support in Mathematics receive 'precision teaching' to close gaps in knowledge, skills and confidence. All students continue to follow the full range of curriculum subjects whilst taking part in catch-up interventions when required.