

**Overview**

Rochester Independent College primarily offers A Level, GCSE and IGCSE examinations although students are also prepared for STEP papers and, for students from overseas, the IELTS examinations. The choice of syllabus is left to the professional judgement of individual teachers.

Our curriculum offers flexibility of course length, few restrictions on subject choices in later years and students are constantly supported to follow a personalised programme where they take exams as and when they are ready, rather than being held back by school year groups.

The College's key objective is to imaginatively tailor an education around the students who come here and we are able to deal with both the most academically able and those who may need extra support. The focus is on identifying individual strengths, weaknesses and interests and developing a programme of study that allows students to move at a pace appropriate to them.

The College has a statutory responsibility to actively promote what the DfE has defined as British values (democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance). The regulations also require independent schools to prevent the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject and to ensure that where political views are presented to students, either in curricular or extracurricular activities, there is a balanced presentation of opposing views. The College has an international staff as well as student body and this contributes towards an environment where respect and inclusion are qualities taught to all of our students both in and out of the classroom, with equal opportunities and respect fostered for all regardless of age, gender, race, religion, disability or any other protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

**The College**

- provides students with a broad general knowledge of and promotes respect for public institutions and services through lessons in subjects such as PSHE, History, English Literature and Geography
- uses student councils throughout the College to help show students how they can influence decision making through participating in democracy
- encourages students in personal tutor meetings and PSHE lessons to be aware of injustice and how this can be challenged
- ensures College rules are fair, transparent and used consistently
- helps students distinguish between right and wrong through PSHE lessons and personal tutor meetings and through the fair and transparent use of our disciplinary and anti-bullying procedures
- uses opportunities in English, History and PSHE lessons to explore the differences between civil, criminal and religious law
- through implementation of our safeguarding and anti-bullying procedures creates an environment where student individuality is celebrated and all feel safe
- delivers a visiting speaker programme that exposes students to a wide range of views and belief systems, which has included talks from international members of the College staff and older international students speaking to our younger students

- in PSHE and English lessons in particular but across the curriculum and through the choice of extra-curricular trips and visits, exposes students to British institutions and other cultures, encouraging respect and tolerance for all. For example:
  - literature studied in English stimulates reflection upon philosophical and cultural issues such as tolerance, diversity, respect and spirituality
  - environmental focus of many of our Lower School schemes of work including Ecology lessons in Year 9 expose students to local, national and international institutions and charities involved in sustainable development as well as local democracy
  - Geography allows students to explore different countries and compare their political, cultural and religious practices to those in Britain
  - the study of British and international events in History, demonstrating the basis on which British institutions were founded

### **PSHE and RSE**

PSHE and RSE are taught discretely from Years 7-11 with each student receiving a one hour session per week. We currently follow the Jigsaw spiral model to ensure good coverage of both PSHE and RSE. PSHE in the Sixth Form builds upon the strengths fostered within the Lower School. Students in Years 12-14 experience PSHE as a 'drop-down' day featuring external speakers and online activities at least once every half term. PSHE topics are also discussed during form times and in Lower School assemblies.

### **Lower School: Years 7 – 11**

For students of statutory school age, our curriculum is designed to offer a broad and balanced education, including access to linguistic, scientific, technological, human, social, physical, aesthetic and creative areas.

The curriculum offers opportunities for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development through many areas:

- PSHE lessons – including aspects of citizenship and education with regard to the world of work and the overall College ethos
- our extensive programme of trips and visits
- our sustainability curriculum strand being rolled out with Year 7 as of September 2023

As appropriate for an international community, our curriculum is non-denominational.

We want our students to develop an interest in a subject for its own sake, not just to learn which boxes to tick in an exam. There is the opportunity to try out a range of subjects, sometimes just for enjoyment. We don't just look at the national frameworks for Years 7-9, GCSE and A Level specifications and decide that is all our students need to know. Teachers encourage students to aim above purely prescriptive GCSEs to A Levels and beyond, to work and university. For example, our sustainability curriculum strand is ambitious and innovative in that we aim to create a holistic, child-led, interdisciplinary and problem-solving sustainability curriculum with outdoor lessons centred around the College gardens.

All teachers deliver subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of students, including students with SEND, so that all students benefit from an education which fulfils their requirements

and provides them with an opportunity to learn and make progress. Guidance to teachers on such strategies is issued by the SENCO.

Although we are not a specialist school, we have a great deal of success meeting the needs of SEND due to our very small classes and lots of individual tuition. Key Stage 3 students have access to the Lexia literacy programme, which is used when deemed necessary by our English Department and SENDCO. Our EAL students benefit from a great deal of 1-1 tuition and small group sessions as well as Year 10 and 11 EAL students studying for an IGCSE in English as a Second Language. Sparx Maths is used across Year 7-11 to improve numeracy. An algorithm differentiates homework to enable all students to progress. Our outdoor lessons enable students with SEND to experience practical applications of numeracy, science and geography concepts and has been found to improve wellbeing and behaviour.

In Years 7-9, a broad curriculum is taught with all students studying English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography and/or Classics, French and/or Spanish, ICT, Music, Drama, Sport, PSHE, Digital Media, Art & Design and Sustainability/Ecology. The Years 7-9 timetable is flexible and can be tailored to the interests of particular year groups. Co-curricular programmes are designed to give students experience of subjects not normally taught at Key Stage 3, for example in 2022-23 Ecology being taught to Year 9 students not continuing with Spanish and Digital Media.

### **Year 7-9 Curriculum - challenge and well being**

The Year 7-9 Curriculum underwent review in 2022-23 with the aims of:

- increasing the level of challenge
- planning for student progression within subjects so that students are prepared well for the rigours GCSE and A level study
- increasing the diversity of the texts and influential people studied to include more role models with protected characteristics

RIC levels are used as assessment criteria and assessed tasks ensure that subject specific higher order thinking and communication skills are taught, assessed and developed. The interdisciplinary and problem solving approach that we are developing in our sustainability curriculum strand aims to enable all to access higher order thinking skills and apply academic learning to a real life context. Our Ecology pilot programme in 2022-23 showed improvement in student wellbeing and behaviour; we expect this to continue as we roll out weekly outdoor lessons for Year 7 from September 2023. The College is developing a common core set of organisational skills and character traits that we value and would like to develop within all subjects.

### **ICT & Digital Literacy**

From September 2023, all students in Years 7-9 will receive a Chromebook. All students will receive induction into the use of Google Drive and its apps at their induction in September. All students in Years 7-9 study ICT with the option to continue on the GCSE programme in Year 10 or as a one year course in Year 11. Lessons cover a broad range of topics including web coding, animation, video editing, games and app design. All students in the Lower School complete initial modules in Staying Safe Online which cover student online safety across multiple platforms in the modern digital age and is reinforced in the PSHE lessons. This curriculum is regularly reviewed. The students in the sixth

form will receive education around online safety and behaviours online in their PSHE drop down days.

Technological education is also covered by the use of information technology in preparing Science and Sustainability projects, the use of compositional software in Music Technology lessons, the use of design and publishing software and digital film making in Art and Design and Digital Media lessons.

### **Sport**

In weekly sessions students are surveyed for their ideas and opinions so we can arrange activities that they will enjoy and are interested in. This has included external provision such as fencing, skiing, trampolining, 10 pin bowling, ice skating, archery, football, volleyball, squash, badminton, climbing, athletics, tag rugby, kickboxing, rounders, sailing, canoeing, yoga and quad biking. Some sports and extra-curricular activities aim at developing students' skills in the field of conservation, for example NICAS climbing qualifications undertaken in Year 12 and Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver Awards offered to students in Years 9-14.

### **Years 10 and 11 Curriculum**

Discussions are held with students in Years 9 and 10 to help them choose their GCSE options with a view to their future career path and further study aspirations. The option blocks are tailored each year to the interests of the year group to satisfy as many students as possible. Students can review their option choices at the end of Year 10 as we are able to offer GCSE courses over one and two years. Only English, Maths and Science are compulsory although everyone is encouraged to take at least one MFL and one Arts subject. Students take between 7 and 11 GCSEs depending on ability and the circumstances in which they join us. All students in Year 11 except those with EAL support take both English and English Literature at IGCSE and follow pathways appropriate to their ability and aspirations. Those with EAL take IGCSE English as a Second Language.

### **Theme weeks**

At various points in the academic year, students in Years 7-10 work on cross-curricular activities and projects, sometimes on a collapsed timetable. Themes are centred around national campaigns and events such as Diversity Awareness Weeks, Anti-Bullying, Mental Health and Wellbeing, British Science Week and Art & Design and students work together across all year groups taking part in a variety of talks, trips, presentations and assignments.

### **Sixth Form Curriculum**

RIC aims to offer students a free choice in A level subject combinations. We help students create as broad a package of A level subjects as possible, particularly in the Lower Sixth. For example, Science and Mathematics students may take Sociology to foster essay writing and communication skills.

The College's personal tutor system is designed to give Year 12 and 13 students individualised advice, particularly for careers and university entrance, once options are chosen.

In the two-year A level programme, students are not expected to sit AS exams, although in certain cases exceptions may be made where it is in the student's best interests. Students usually choose four subjects in Year 12 and drop one in Year 13. EAL students start Year 12 on three subjects to

enable them appropriate time to study for the IELTS exam and attend English for Academic Purposes lessons. If students are retaking GCSEs they may take two or three subjects in Year 12. The flexibility of our timetable means that students can, where appropriate, drop a subject in favour of another with the agreement of parents/carers and their personal tutors, based on their interests, aptitudes and future aims. The flexibility of the Sixth Form curriculum means that the timetable is very fluid and can be revised at various points in the academic year.

Many students join RIC just for Year 13 or to retake their A levels. Their curriculum is an individually tailored one that often includes a mixture of retake courses and intensive one year A levels.

Students wishing to specialise in the Creative or Performing Arts at A Level are usually encouraged to take at least one more traditionally academic subject alongside. Subject combinations with too much overlap, e.g. Media Studies and Film Studies or Business Studies and Economics are discouraged unless to the clear benefit of the student's future aims.

### **Careers & Futures Curriculum**

The college recognises that all young people need a planned programme of activities to aid their decision-making and help them plan for the future. We also recognise the statutory right of all students to receive impartial careers education and confidential guidance.

In the Sixth Form, there are drop-down days devoted to careers, with students receiving guidance and support from their personal tutors when considering future career paths and choices. While it remains the case that most sixth formers attend the college with the aim of securing a place at their chosen university, the college is careful to ensure that advice about different career routes is also offered.

The college offers a planned programme of careers education, information and guidance for all students which is appropriate to their age, stage, ability and educational needs. This guidance is provided through a range of different events and activities. We are particularly keen to challenge gender or cultural stereotypes when it comes to presenting particular career paths to students. We use the Unifrog platform and the Gatsby Framework within the college to support students to make the best choices about their future.

All teaching staff make a contribution to careers education and guidance through their roles as subject teachers. The planning of activities is based on students' choices and the evaluation of activities provides guidance for future activities. A significant contribution is made by personal tutors in their tutee meetings. UCAS counselling remains a core part of sixth form careers education and guidance with the Principal, Vice-Principal for College Futures, and Senior UCAS Team sharing oversight of this extensive process. Careers education and guidance includes supporting sixth-form students as they investigate university options, with in-school discussion of visits to university open days both before and after they take place.

As part of our careers programme we utilise the support of our partner organisations within Dukes Education (Dukes Careers Plus): The Law Portal, The Medic Portal, A List Education, Oxbridge Applications and InvestIn.

In the Lower School, careers forms part of PSHE curriculum and dedicated sessions and feature specific careers development. In the Lower School the PSHE programme from Jigsaw contains units that explicitly look at personal economic competence and understanding of the purpose and uses of money.

Students in Year 10 are actively encouraged to complete work experience placements; support and guidance is given for this, including briefing sessions. Year 10 will also utilise support from *Investin*.

In the Lower School careers education is overseen, as part of the PSHE programme, by the Director of Studies for PSHE and Careers. In sixth form the provision is overseen by the Academic Director, Sixth Form Careers Lead.

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