

CURRICULUM POLICY

2025/26

1. Vision and Rationale

Rochester Independent College aims to offer a curriculum that:

- offers **broad and varied choice** of subjects from the linguistic, scientific, technological, human, social, physical, aesthetic and creative spheres with few restrictions on subject combinations
- values the **creative and academic** equally
- **prepares students for** living, studying and working in **the 21st century**
- is **accessible** to all, including those with SEND and EAL
- is **personalised** - identifying individual strengths, weaknesses and interests and developing a programme of study tailored to the individual
- is **flexible** - students are supported to move subjects where appropriate or take exams as and when they are ready, allowing students to move at a pace appropriate to them.
- is **planned for progression**, providing appropriate challenge
- is **enjoyable**, fostering a love of learning for its own sake

2. The Core Curriculum

The core curriculum refers to learning that is explicitly planned, timetabled and delivered as discrete subjects. Heads of Department and Subject Leads hold responsibility for planning and reviewing the curriculum in their subjects and departments. The Vice Principal Academic has oversight of the core curriculum. It is reviewed with SLT annually following examination results and in-year on an ad hoc basis as new students request different courses.

Students **usually** study for the following external qualifications in the core curriculum. However, students are not limited by age and bespoke arrangements are often made.

Year group	External qualifications usually studied for in each year group
Year 14 (undertaken in 1 year, usually older resitting students)	A levels - students usually start on 4 A level options in Year 12, dropping to 3 in Years 13/14. There are no entry requirements based on (i)GCSE prior attainment. Most subjects do not enter Year 12 students for AS exams. Level 3 BTEC National Extended Diploma OR National Foundation Diploma in Drama, Music and/or Sport.
Year 13	IELTs qualification for international students who do not have an (i)GCSE in English with the speaking & listening component grade 5+ and want to study at a UK University. (i)GCSE retakes usually in Maths, English and/or Sciences for those who want to improve their grade, usually sat in Year 12. STEP and other University entrance exams papers for relevant students.
Year 12	

Year 11 (some students undertake these in 1 year))	GCSEs and iGCSEs - students usually take between 7 and 11 subjects depending on ability, circumstances and aspirations. The vast majority of students study English, Maths and Science. All students except those with EAL take English Language and English Literature. Those with EAL support take English Language only when they are ready
Year 10	Level 2 BTEC in Music. EAL lessons for students with English as an Additional Language.
Years 7-9	For most students, no external qualifications are sat: the core curriculum encompasses linguistic, scientific, technological, human, social, physical, aesthetic and creative spheres.

Common bespoke arrangements including external qualifications take out of year:

Year group	External qualifications usually studied for in each year group
Year 12	EAL students start with 4 A levels, they may drop to 3 if they need additional EAL or are taking their first language as an A level. Individuals often take an A level in their native language at the end of Year 12. Some may take other A or AS levels by the end of Year 12 in line with their aspirations.
Year 10	Some students take a GCSE in their native language at the end of Year 10. Some students take an (i)GCSE early in line with their aspirations.
Years 7-9	Some students take an (i)GCSE early in line with their aspirations.

Individual arrangements outside of these are often made. The choice of syllabus is left to the professional judgement of individual Heads of Department and Subject Leads.

2.1 PSHE and RSHE

The PSHE and RSHE curriculum is planned and reviewed by the Vice Principals, Pastoral and Academic and delivered by our PSHE teacher and external speakers in timetabled lessons, assemblies and off timetable drop down days. The PSHE and RSHE curriculum also delivers aspects of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) education which is covered under **3.4**, the Holistic Personal Development cross curricular strand.

PSHE and RSHE is taught to all year groups as follows:

Year group	PSHE and RSHE is delivered through:
Year 14	PSHE and RSHE are not statutory as these students are over school-age. They are therefore invited to the Sixth Form sessions outlined below.
Years 12-13	Drop down days or half days, where students attend off-timetable workshops, sometimes delivered by visiting speakers, and through trips.



Years 10- 11	• Drop down sessions of off-timetable workshops • Assemblies and form time activities • Visiting speakers • Off timetable workshops such as Investin days and trips • The Unifrog careers platform
Years 7-9	• Weekly 1 hour PSHE lessons • Assemblies and form time activities • Off-timetable workshops, visiting speakers and trips • The Unifrog careers resources

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is consulted in the design of the PSHE and RSHE curriculum with reference to contextual safeguarding information collated about the College and the local area using resources from Safer Medway, PoEd and the PSHE association..

All year groups study the following key themes:

Term 1: Navigating school, self and society

Term 2: Careers

Term 3: Understanding the law

Term 4: Wellbeing and Wisdom: Thriving in Body, Mind and life

Term 5: Relationships and sex education

Term 6: Online safety

Understanding deepens, issues become more complex and content develops appropriately as students move towards adulthood.

Subjects where teaching most frequently develops PSHE themes include Sustainability and Science lessons in Years 7-9, Business, Economics and Science lessons in Years 10 and 11 and Politics, Sociology and Psychology lessons in Year 12-14.

Personal economic competence and understanding of the purpose and uses of money are taught across multiple topics throughout the year groups.

2.2 Careers and Futures

The Careers and Futures curriculum is planned by the Vice Principal, Futures and provides a planned programme of careers education using the Gatsby Framework. Information and guidance for all students is tailored to their age, stage, ability and educational needs . This enables students to make well-informed course choices and enables them to plan for the future.

Students receive impartial careers education and confidential guidance via:

- Directors of Study
- the PSHE Curriculum **(2.1)** - careers education is undertaken in Term 2.



- the Unifrog portal.
- partner organisations within Dukes Education (Dukes Careers School) as appropriate :
The Law Portal, The Medic Portal, A List Education, Oxbridge Applications and InvestIn.

Activities are planned based on students' choices and interests and the evaluation of activities provides guidance for future activities. We are particularly keen to challenge gender or cultural stereotypes when it comes to presenting particular career paths to students.

Sixth Form Directors of Studies give students individualised information, guidance and advice on their next steps including:

- current course changes
- UCAS counselling, including discussions before and after university open day visits
- advice on international university applications
- advice alternative routes such as Drama School
- careers advice.

The Principal, Vice-Principal, Futures, and the Head of Sixth Form share oversight of this extensive process.

Year 12 students are enrolled in the Dukes Careers Plus, where they undertake 2 days of careers work with *Investin*. This includes a careers specific day at UCL with industry professionals and an assessment centre day run at the college.

Directors of Study hold discussions with Year 9 and 10 students to help them choose, and sometimes amend, their GCSE options with a view to their future career path and further study aspirations. Students can review their option choices at the end of Year 10 as we offer GCSE courses over one and two years. Students in Year 10 engage with Unifrog virtual work experience days in the summer term. Year 10 students are also enrolled in the Dukes Careers Plus, where they undertake 2 days of careers work with *Investin*. This includes a careers specific day at UCL with industry professionals and an assessment centre day run at the college.

Opportunities for careers education are fostered in subject lessons across the curriculum and through extra curricular activities, enhanced by our recruitment of teachers who are also active practitioners in their field, for example practising artists, photographers, textile designers, musicians and playwrights.

2.3 Sport & Recreation

The Vice Principal, Student Experience oversees the Sport curriculum and extra-curricular sporting activities. All students in Years 7-11 undertake 2 hours of timetabled Sport per week in a varied programme of study that utilises local sports facilities as well as our onsite gym and Multi-Use Games Area. GCSE PE is offered to students from Year 10. BTEC National extended Diploma in Sport is offered in the Sixth Form alongside an extracurricular programme of activities that varies each year and which students undertake at lunch or after school. The



Sports Leaders Programme is made available to all students in Year 9 and encourages students to develop leadership skills alongside general health and wellbeing.

Across the College, student voice informs the programme of Sports activities offered both within and outside of timetabled lessons and 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.

Students across the College are provided with opportunities to participate in super-curricular activities, which are identified and promoted by the relevant Heads of Department. Programmes such as the UKMT Maths Challenge, Industrial Cadets (Via BAE Systems), the Great British Economics Olympiad and ISA Essay Writing and Art competitions have high levels of participation.

2.4 Sustainability curriculum for Years 7-9

Our sustainability curriculum taught to Years 7-9 is planned and regularly reviewed by the Vice Principal Academics & Sustainability. It is holistic, child-led, interdisciplinary and problem-solving. It teaches students regenerative design skills for them to collaborate on real-world projects to improve the sustainability of the College. The curriculum includes regular outdoor lessons centred around the College gardens and the local Kent landscape. It is tailored to be accessible to students with SEND by learning from the physical world and by explicitly applying academic learning (especially from Art, Digital Media, Geography and Science) in an interdisciplinary way to real life contexts. Numeracy and literacy are an especial focus and tasks are designed in response to cohort weaknesses in these areas. The curriculum values neurodiverse approaches to problem-solving and aims to improve wellbeing through contact with nature and through open discussions about team dynamics.

Students are assessed on knowledge and understanding of the natural world, observation skills and field study, research and data collection and communication, advocacy and action, enabling all students to achieve success in ways that do not always involve formal writing.

2.5 UAL Foundation Diploma in Art and Design for students aged 17+

Offered to students aged 17+ from September 2025, this is a multidisciplinary, full-time 1 year course that includes at least 16 hours per week of specialist art tuition and unlimited studio time during college hours. Entry requirements for the diploma are English language to IELTS 5.5 or equivalent; 5 GCSEs or equivalent or successful completion of RIC's Pre-Foundation course or completion of Year 12 in their home country.

Students undertake 4 mandatory units:



Unit 1: Diagnostic Investigation into Creative Practice

Unit 2: Developing Specialist Practice - taught and assessed at Level 3

Unit 3: Consolidating Practice - taught and assessed at Level 4

The range of disciplines offered include Fine Art, Graphic Communication, Fashion & Textiles Design, Photography and lens based media, Ceramics & 3D (from September 2026). Students are required to complete a final major project from a self-directed brief culminating in a public exhibition which the students themselves curate.

This curriculum is regularly reviewed by the Senior Vice Principal and the Head of Art.

3. Cross-curricular strands

Cross-curricular strands are delivered across subjects and are not timetabled as discrete lessons.

3.1 Literacy

From September 2025, Lower School teachers of English, Film Studies, History and Geography as well as boarding staff, the SENCOs and the Vice Principal, Academic have all been trained in Reciprocal Reading strategies to improve reading for meaning, both for those who struggle to read for meaning and the most able. These strategies can then be used as appropriate in subject lessons, form times and in boarding supporting students with EAL. In addition to MidYis cognitive ability testing, which has a Vocabulary element, from 2025, we are piloting the use of a Reading Age test on the Reciprocal Reading platform.

Students with English as an Additional Language in Years 9-14 benefit from EAL lessons that prepare them for the IELTS examination and/or enable them to access academic study as appropriate.

Literacy is developed for those with SEND through all students in Years 7-11 having Chromebooks and access to Touch Type Read & Spell - a programme training students in touch typing.

The Literacy Curriculum strand is jointly overseen by the Vice Principal Academic and the SENDCOs.

3.2 Numeracy

Students' numeracy skills are developed across the Curriculum, most notably in subjects such as Business Studies, Economics, Geography, Maths, Sciences, Psychology, Sociology and Sustainability. The Sustainability Curriculum makes numeracy accessible to neurodiverse students and challenges the most able by using mathematical skills in the College gardens to measure environmental impact and create and implement regenerative designs.

In addition to MidYis cognitive ability testing, which has a numeracy element, Year 7 students undertake a baseline test on the Sparx Maths platform which then informs teacher planning



and student grouping. The platform differentiates homework according to ability to enable all students to progress. The Sparx Maths platform is used for students in Year 7-11 and Sixth Form iGCSE retake students.

Our supportive Numeracy Curriculum for students in Years 7-9 who struggle to meet age-related expectations is delivered in 1:1 and small group sessions by our Numeracy Teaching Assistant. This curriculum follows the CatchUp numeracy programme for those working below age-related expectations for an 11 year old. Our numeracy TA has developed and delivers a supportive and flexible Numeracy Curriculum beyond age 11 which she uses with older students who are working below age-related expectations.

The Sixth Form curriculum includes the opportunity for students who have not gained a grade 4 or 5 in (i)GCSE Mathematics and need it for their future aspirations to be taught Retake iGCSE Maths.

Access to numeracy support is determined by the Head of Maths and Directors of Studies informed by performance data and an assessment of who is most likely to benefit. The Numeracy Curriculum strand is jointly overseen by the Vice Principal Academic and the SENDCOs.

3.3 Digital Wisdom

We aim to equip students with an understanding of the risks and the skills to effectively navigate and thrive in an increasingly digital world. This Curriculum strand is regularly reviewed by the Digital Wisdom Task Force led by the Vice Principal Academic.

Academic digital skills are integrated into the curriculum across subjects for inclusivity. We teach, collaborate and communicate via Google; all students have their own Chromebook. There are Google Classrooms for all subjects. Academic subjects develop skills such as online research, word processing, presenting and spreadsheet use in lessons. Students for whom typing is beneficial may use their Chromebooks as their main way of working. All students have access to the TTRS platform (Touch-Type, Read and Spell) to develop their touch-typing abilities.

Students are introduced to coding and emerging creative technologies from Year 7 upwards via Computer Science, Digital Media and Music lessons. Graphic Communication and Photography appear in the Arts carousel from Key Stage 3 onwards.

Ethical Digital Citizenship and Online Safety are developed across subjects where online academic ethics are discussed, reinforcing the difference between plagiarism and research and the responsible use of AI, especially in subjects with NEAs and coursework. Online safety is explicitly taught in Computer Science and PSHE (2.1) lessons enabling students to understand digital risks, data protection, social media literacy and responsible online behaviour.



See the **AI policy** for codes of practice.

We teach students to limit screen time for wellbeing. We are phone free in the Lower School as students put their phones in a Yondr pouch at the beginning of the day. We discourage computer games at break time in the summer and we explain the rationale for this in assemblies. Alternatives to screens are offered in Sport **(2.3)**, Recreation **(4)** and timetabled outdoor Sustainability lessons **(2.4)**.

3.4 Holistic Personal Development & Wellbeing

This curriculum strand includes all aspects of **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education (SMSC)** as well as how the curriculum ensures student wellbeing. It is jointly overseen by the Vice Principal, Academics & Sustainability and the Vice Principal, Pastoral & Welfare.

3.41 Spiritual education

Students' curiosity about their own and others' beliefs are developed through the PSHE curriculum **(2.1)** in Term 1 (Navigating school self and society) and Term 3 (Understanding the law). Sustainability lessons **(2.4)** in Years 7-9 include reflections on human nature compared to other organisms and our place in the ecosystem and on the planet. The core Arts and Humanities subjects explore spiritual themes as part of the curriculum. As appropriate for an international community, our curriculum is non-denominational.

3.42 Moral education - Fundamental British Values & Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We actively promote what the DfE has defined as **Fundamental British values** (democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance).

Democracy and the rule of law are explicitly taught in PSHE **(2.1)** and subjects such as English, Geography, History, Politics and Sociology in which British institutions, the influences upon them and differences between civil, religious and criminal law are explained. The Student Council and Politics and Sustainability lessons show students how they can challenge injustice and influence decision making through participating in local, national and international democracy and through charities and NGOs. Students distinguish between right and wrong through PSHE lessons, Director of Study and personal tutor meetings, assemblies (both proactive and reactive) and through the fair and transparent use of our behaviour, disciplinary and anti-bullying procedures. PSHE **(2.1)**, Sustainability **(2.4)**, assemblies and form time activities provide opportunities for consideration of the legal, social and environmental consequences of human actions.

We prevent the promotion of partisan political views and ensure there is a balanced presentation of opposing views in the curriculum by checking material of outside speakers, through oversight of curriculum plans and via lesson observations, work scrutinies and student voice. Safeguarding training ensures staff are aware of this responsibility when planning and



delivering lessons. We do not present opposing views that are scientifically inaccurate without drawing attention to this fact.

Mutual respect and tolerance are explicitly taught in PSHE **(2.1)** Terms 1 and 5 and through our programme of activities organised by our Equality and Diversity Lead. Mutual respect and tolerance are promoted via our international staff and student body and our neurodiverse demographic. This contributes towards an environment where respect and inclusion are qualities taught to all students both in and out of the classroom, with equal opportunities and respect fostered for all regardless of any protected characteristic set out in the Equality Act 2010. Implementation of our safeguarding and anti-bullying procedures creates an environment where student individuality is celebrated and all feel safe.

3.43 Social education

Students' social skills are explicitly developed through the PSHE curriculum **(2.1)** in Term 1 and form time activities. Teamwork and leadership are developed across all subjects most explicitly in Sport **(2.3)** and Sustainability **(2.4)**, where students also develop a responsible attitude towards the environment.

3.43 Cultural education

Our extensive programme of extra-curricular trips and visits, especially in the Arts, exposes students to other cultures, encouraging respect and tolerance for all. A visiting speaker programme 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.

4. Extra-curricular activities and Recreation

We offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities curated by the Vice Principal, Student Experience in consultation with the Student Council. Our offer varies year-on-year in response to student voice and includes a range of activities from the linguistic, scientific, technological, human, social, physical (see **2.3 Sport & Recreation**), aesthetic and creative spheres. Commonly offered activities and clubs range from Instrumental lessons (singing, drumming, guitar, bass guitar and piano) to Debating Society, Sports Clubs to Social Justice Club, Duke of Edinburgh Award to undertaking a qualification in Teaching English as Foreign Language, Art therapy to Chess Club. Some of these activities can result in accreditation. A full list of this year's clubs is available from the Vice Principal, Student Experience.

We undertake student-led fundraising events for charity and volunteer in the local community, again informed by student voice via the Student Council. Charitable causes have ranged from winter coat drives to the Faversham Physic Garden. Volunteering opportunities have ranged from gardening for the local charity, Chatham Intra to litter picking and undertaking conservation work for Plantlife and the Kent Wildlife Trust. A full list of charitable giving and volunteering is available from the Vice Principal, Student Experience.



We aim to invite to College a range of visiting speakers throughout the year; tailoring these visits to the wants and needs of the students. Targeted speakers assist with our PSHE provision and can build upon specific areas of interest across all year groups.

5. Provision for those with SEND

The breadth of our curriculum provides opportunities for neurodiverse students to excel academically, creatively, digitally, and in physical performance. The variety of courses on offer, including BTEC vocational qualifications, Functional Skills Maths and those that are portfolio and coursework based, allows students, supported by their Director of Studies, to find what they love and play to their strengths.

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 SENDCO.

Though we are not a special school, neurodiverse students make good progress here thanks to:

- small classes and individual tuition
- a flexible and common-sense approach to reasonable student requests, such as facilitating independent learning
- tailored programmes of study including the supportive curriculum in literacy and numeracy mentioned above
- access to digital tools to support creativity, literacy and numeracy mentioned above
- entering students for examinations when they are ready.
- the prominence of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in the curriculum and in extra-curricular provision (including studying diverse texts and influential people with protected characteristics) , which enables neurodiverse and disabled students to feel accepted and find role models

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