THE PERSE SCHOOL
CAMBRIDGE

Upper Curriculum Policy

The Perse School

September 2026

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1. Curriculum overview and objectives

The Upper curriculum translates the School's purpose, vision and values into a coherent educational experience for pupils in Years 7-13.

This policy should be read with the overarching Perse 3-18 Curriculum Overview and the policies and operational documents listed in section 8. The curriculum supports the School's purpose, *"We make the future better"*, by providing an inspiring, caring, balanced and ambitious education. It combines consistently high-quality teaching with a stimulating curriculum, strong pastoral support, rich extra-curricular opportunities, Cambridge connections and an international outlook.

The Upper curriculum is designed to enable every pupil to acquire secure and increasingly sophisticated knowledge, understanding and skills, to think independently, to participate fully in a broad range of experiences, and to move confidently to the next stage of education and life.

Its **objectives** are to:

- provide an intellectually ambitious, coherent and cumulative curriculum taught by subject specialists;
- promote intellectual curiosity, scholarship, creativity and a lifelong love of learning;
- sustain breadth and balance across academic, linguistic, creative, technical, physical, personal and social education;
- enable every pupil to access learning, make progress and receive suitable support or challenge;
- develop independence, research, communication, collaboration, reflection and responsible use of digital technology;
- foster agency, character, responsibility, resilience, perspective and care for other people and the environment and
- prepare pupils for informed choices, further study, future employment and constructive participation in society.

The Upper curriculum gives practical expression to the School's values and vision, with the particular regard to the three core curriculum principles of challenge, breadth and independent thinking.

Challenge	The curriculum is intellectually ambitious, stimulating and demanding. Specialist teaching, appropriate pace, depth and extension help pupils develop secure knowledge and the confidence to meet new intellectual challenges.
Breadth and balance	A broad core is sustained for as long as possible and is complemented by creative, technical, linguistic, physical, personal and extra-curricular experiences. Choice increases with age without losing the benefits of a rounded education.
Independent thinking	Pupils learn to question, reason, research, create, collaborate and reflect. Structured opportunities for independent study and investigation develop progressively from Year 7 to the Sixth Form.

2. Access, Equality and Anti-discrimination

The School is committed to fair access, inclusive practice and a curriculum in which every pupil is treated with dignity and enabled to participate fully.

The school's commitments are set out in:

- Admissions Policy & Procedure
- Equal Treatment Policy - Pupils
- Disability Policy – Pupils
- Inclusion, Equality & Diversity Policy
- Policy on Special Educational Needs (SEN) (or SEND) and English as an Additional Language (EAL) policy
- Learning Support Charges Policy (internal)
- 3-18 Accessibility Plan

Reasonable adjustments are also covered in the following policies: Behaviour and Discipline, Educational Visits, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Anti-Bullying, Permanent Exclusion and Removal (Review procedure).

Curriculum decisions, teaching, assessment, educational visits and extra-curricular opportunities are planned so that pupils are not unnecessarily disadvantaged by individual needs or circumstances. Teachers establish respectful learning environments, model inclusive language and conduct, and challenge discriminatory or extremist comments, assumptions and behaviour. Concerns are reported through the appropriate safeguarding, pastoral or behaviour procedures.

2.1 Opportunity to learn and make progress for all pupils

The school is committed to a high-quality educational provision for all pupils. Safeguarding, anti-bullying, behaviour and wellbeing arrangements underpin every pupil's opportunity to learn in a safe and ordered environment.

Where a pupil's learning is affected by a special educational need or disability, English as an additional language, health, attendance, wellbeing or exceptional personal circumstances, appropriate support is planned with the pupil, parents and relevant staff. Pupils' needs are assessed individually by the Learning Support team, which advises staff and, where appropriate, maintains an Individual Learning Support Profile describing agreed strategies and reasonable adjustments. Where English is an additional language, the School assesses the pupil's ability to access the curriculum and provides or coordinates suitable support. Teachers are expected to use the information provided by Learning Support and pastoral colleagues when planning, teaching and assessing.

Where illness, hospitalisation or other exceptional circumstances significantly disrupt attendance, the School agrees a proportionate plan to maintain educational continuity and support reintegration.

2.2 Pupil aptitude, needs and learning support provision

The School is academically selective and its pupils are generally highly able, but each cohort and class contains a range of prior knowledge, subject strengths, learning profiles, confidence and rates of progress. Pupils are therefore known and supported as individuals rather than defined by a single score, label or prior attainment measure.

Teachers, tutors, heads of department, pastoral staff and Learning Support share relevant information so that emerging needs are identified early and support is coordinated. Sources of evidence include classroom work, assessment, baseline information, reports, attendance and pastoral information, pupil and parent communication, and professional observation. Information is shared only with those who need it for the pupil's education and welfare.

Additional support may include subject surgeries, revision sessions, timetabled support, academic mentoring, adjusted resources, assistive technology, counselling or pastoral intervention. Support should have a clear purpose, be reviewed, and strengthen pupils' capacity to participate independently wherever possible.

2.3 Meeting the needs of *more* able pupils

The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of able pupils and to provide appropriate stretch and challenge for all. Challenges are built into the curriculum planning and classroom practice rather than reserved for a small group or added only after routine work is complete.

Departments plan for depth, complexity, pace, independent application and increasingly demanding subject thinking. Schemes of work identify extension and enrichment opportunities, including wider reading, research, competitions, lectures, societies and links with external partners.

Teachers use questioning, task design, resources and feedback to ensure that all pupils are encouraged to think and learn in lessons.

Setting is used in selected subjects and year groups where it is deemed educationally beneficial and is reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to support progress.

3. Teaching and Learning

The School's central expectation is that pupils experience consistently high-quality teaching which secures strong learning over time.

Teaching at The Perse is purposeful, inclusive and appropriately challenging. It draws on secure subject knowledge, makes intended learning and standards clear, engages pupils actively, checks and responds to understanding, and develops increasing independence. Adaptation improves access without lowering expectations, and learning takes place in an orderly, respectful and safe environment.

The quality of teaching is considered through a range of evidence, including curriculum planning, pupils' work and progress, classroom practice, assessment, pupil experience and departmental outcomes. The Teachers' Standards provide a reference point alongside the School's own Quality of Education (Teaching and Learning policy).

Departments and teachers are expected to select the approaches most suited to the subject, pupils and intended learning. A high-quality lesson may therefore look different in a laboratory, studio, workshop, rehearsal, sports setting or traditional classroom, but it should always be purposeful, inclusive and directed towards worthwhile learning.

3.1 Planning, sequencing and adaptation

Curriculum planning begins with the important knowledge, concepts and disciplinary habits pupils should develop, and sequences these so that new learning builds on secure foundations. Departments maintain clear curriculum documentation, normally through a departmental handbook, curriculum maps and schemes of work. These identify aims, content, sequencing, assessment, resources, extension and enrichment,

learning support integration, cross-curricular contributions, digital approaches and relevant health and safety requirements. Departments review schemes of work regularly and work across the 3-18 School to support continuity, avoid unnecessary repetition and establish suitable progression.

In the classroom, teachers use evidence of prior learning and ongoing checks for understanding to adapt explanations, examples, grouping, scaffolding, pace, practice and resources. Planning gives deliberate attention to pupils who need additional consolidation and to those ready for greater depth or independence. Adaptation is used judiciously to improve access without unnecessarily narrowing the curriculum or lowering expectations. Support is gradually reduced as pupils become more secure and independent. Learning Support Profiles, EAL guidance and relevant pastoral information are incorporated into planning, alongside strategies that benefit the whole class.

3.2 Feedback, assessment and home learning

Assessment is used to identify prior knowledge and misconceptions, check understanding, inform next steps, consolidate learning, evaluate curriculum effectiveness, certify attainment and communicate progress. Departments use an appropriate balance of formative and summative assessment suited to the subject and age group.

Assessment tasks are designed to be valid, appropriately demanding and proportionate to the information they are intended to provide. Feedback is timely, clear and actionable, and may be verbal, written, whole-class, individual, peer or self-generated, providing pupils with suitable opportunities to understand and use it. Pupils are taught to review their work, respond to feedback, correct misconceptions and use success criteria or exemplars with increasing independence.

Departmental assessment and feedback guidance is aligned with the School's overarching policy and is reviewed through departmental quality assurance.

Home learning is used to reinforce, extend or prepare for classroom learning and helps pupils develop independence, organisation and effective study habits. The amount and form of homework are age-appropriate and coordinated through published guidance. Teachers exercise reasonable flexibility where a pupil's needs or circumstances make adjustment appropriate, while preserving the intended learning wherever possible.

3.3 Monitoring, tracking and reporting

Teachers and leaders use a balanced range of quantitative and qualitative evidence to understand pupil progress and evaluate the curriculum. This may include classroom assessment, internal examinations, public examination results, baseline measures such as Cambridge Insight data where used, pupils' work, attendance, participation, destinations and professional judgement.

Individual tracking is used to identify pupils who may be underachieving, require additional support, or need greater challenge.

Departments review patterns over time, including absolute attainment, progress and value-added measures, to evaluate curriculum sequencing, assessment and teaching.

Senior leaders and governors review overall and subject outcomes, relevant cohort patterns, examination procedures and progression data. Group comparisons are interpreted carefully and used to improve equality of opportunity.

External benchmarking may be used where it provides a valid comparison and supports improvement.

Reports, grades, parents' evenings and tutorial conversations communicate attainment, learning habits, progress and next steps. Pupils are increasingly involved in reviewing and discussing their own learning.

3.4 Health, safety and educational visits

Health and safety are part of effective curriculum planning and teaching. Departments identify and control foreseeable risks, maintain appropriate procedures for specialist spaces and practical work, and teach pupils to use equipment, materials and environments safely. Staff follow the School's Health and Safety Policy and relevant departmental guidance.

Educational visits are an important extension of classroom learning. They may deepen subject understanding, provide opportunities to practise skills, broaden cultural experience and develop independence and social responsibility. Visits are planned and led in accordance with the Educational Visits Policy, including suitable consent, staffing, accessibility and risk assessment arrangements.

4. Curriculum structure

The curriculum remains broad for as long as possible, introduces increasing choice at appropriate points, and allows proportionate flexibility for individual pupils.

The detailed subject offer, option blocks and period allocations are published separately and reviewed annually. The current curriculum engagement and option booklets are authoritative for each cohort. The enduring structure is summarised below.

Stage	Curriculum model	Key features
Years 7-8	Broad common curriculum	All pupils study English and Drama, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, History, Philosophy, Ethics and Religion, modern foreign languages, Classics, Art and Design, Music, Computer Science, Design and Technology, PSHE and emotional wellbeing, PE and Games. Perse Themes and Projects course supports development of independent study and research skills.
Year 9	Broad core with guided choice	English, Mathematics, the three sciences, PSHE and emotional wellbeing, PE and Games remain central. Pupils make a guided choice of seven subjects from the humanities, creative, technical, linguistic and other options published for that cohort.
Years 10-11	Broad GCSE programme	Pupils continue English, Mathematics, PSHE, PE and Games, and normally six GCSE options. Individual flexibility is available where a different programme is in a pupil's best interests. Further Mathematics, project qualifications and selected additional or off-timetable subjects may be available.
Sixth Form	Specialist study with breadth and independence	Pupils usually begin with up to four subjects and many continue with three in the Upper Sixth; pupils taking Mathematics and Further Mathematics commonly retain four. The programme is complemented by PSHE and tutorial provision, academic support, enrichment, and opportunities such as the EPQ or a Rouse independent research project.

4.1 Breadth, choice and flexibility

Across Years 7-11 the curriculum provides linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education, together with PSHE and the cross-curricular development of literacy, oracy, numeracy, digital competence and research skills.

Core education coverage spectrum: Years 7-11

Area	Principal contributing subjects	Notes
Linguistic	English, Drama, Modern and Classical Languages, Humanities, Themes and Projects	Develop pupils' command of language and communication through listening, speaking, reading and writing, enabling them to communicate clearly, accurately and confidently for different purposes and audiences.
Mathematical	Mathematics, Sciences, Economics, Computer Science, Design and Technology	Develop numerical fluency and an understanding of number, quantity, pattern, shape and space. Pupils learn to calculate accurately, interpret data, reason logically and communicate mathematical ideas clearly.
Scientific	Sciences, Computer Science, Geography, Psychology	Develop knowledge and understanding of the natural and physical world. Pupils build scientific enquiry skills through observation, questioning, hypothesis formation, investigation, experimentation, measurement, analysis and evaluation, and communicate their findings clearly.
Technological	Design and Technology, Computer Science, Themes and Projects, Year 9 Introduction to AI course	Develop pupils' ability to use digital and physical technologies purposefully, safely and responsibly. Pupils design, plan, create, code, test, refine and communicate solutions; evaluate processes and outcomes; and consider the ethical, social and environmental implications of technology, including artificial intelligence.
Human and social	English, Geography, History, Philosophy, Ethics and Religion, Politics, Psychology, Ancient History, Classics, Modern Foreign Languages	Develop knowledge and understanding of individuals, societies, cultures, beliefs, institutions and environments, including how these change over time. Pupils learn to interpret different perspectives, evaluate evidence, qualify claims, construct reasoned arguments and communicate conclusions clearly in written and oral forms.
Physical	Games, Physical Education, Drama, Perse Exploration Society	Develop knowledge and understanding of health, fitness and physical wellbeing, together with physical competence, control and coordination. Pupils develop tactical awareness, teamwork and the ability to evaluate their performance, set goals and improve.
Aesthetic and creative	Art and Design, Music, Drama, Design and Technology	Develop imagination, creativity and aesthetic awareness through making, performing, composing, designing and inventing. Pupils learn to explore, refine and evaluate creative work and to communicate ideas in visual, musical, dramatic and material forms.

Pupils and parents receive guidance before subject choices are made. Choices are supported by subject information, presentations, tutorial discussion and individual advice. The School seeks to accommodate preferences but may need to take account of timetable construction, staffing, group viability and the educational coherence of a pupil's programme.

A flexible programme may be agreed where a pupil would benefit from a different number or combination of subjects. Additional qualifications may also be offered through twilight, lunchtime or extra-curricular provision. Such arrangements are considered individually and should preserve breadth, wellbeing and future progression.

4.2 Qualifications and curriculum review

The School's main examined curriculum uses Ofqual-regulated GCSE and A level qualifications. Additional project, language or other qualifications may be offered where they add educational value and can be delivered with appropriate quality assurance. Departments review specifications, schemes of work and assessment arrangements regularly, taking account of subject developments, examination outcomes, pupil needs and progression requirements.

Curriculum review is both subject-specific and whole-school. Heads of department evaluate content, sequencing, resources, assessment, inclusion and enrichment through annual planning and review. Senior leaders consider the balance and coherence of the overall offer, while 3-18 subject dialogue supports continuity between the Junior and Senior divisions.

5. Digital learning, artificial intelligence and academic integrity

Digital technology and artificial intelligence can widen access, improve feedback, support creativity and enable new forms of learning. Their use must remain purposeful, safe, equitable and consistent with genuine pupil authorship.

5.1 Digital learning

The School provides a managed digital environment, age-appropriate devices and access arrangements, filtering and security controls, and a suite of tools for teaching, communication and independent study. The current Digital Strategy and Acceptable Use of ICT policies set out the operational model, including managed devices and Sixth Form bring-your-own-device arrangements.

Digital technology is used when it adds clear educational value, avoiding adoption simply because it is available. Teachers model responsible use of data, copyright, online sources, communication tools and shared platforms, and make reasonable use of accessibility features and assistive technology. Departments consider screen time, distraction, workload, access and the balance between digital and non-digital approaches when planning learning.

Pupils progressively develop practical digital competence, including organisation, communication, collaboration, creation, coding or data handling where relevant, and the critical evaluation of online information. They are taught to protect accounts and personal information, recognise online risks and seek help when digital activity causes concern.

5.2 Artificial intelligence

AI tools may be used only where their use has been approved by the School, is age-appropriate and support the intended learning purpose. For each task, teachers remain responsible for exercising professional judgement in the design, supervision and assessment of pupils' work. Pupils remain responsible for ensuring that the work they submit is their own and that any permitted use of AI is appropriately acknowledged. In relation to any non-examination assessments, the School complies with all applicable JCQ regulations and guidance, together with any relevant awarding-body requirements.

5.3 Academic integrity

Academic integrity requires pupils to submit work that is genuinely their own, to represent their knowledge and contribution honestly, and to acknowledge sources and assistance appropriately. This applies to classwork, homework, internal assessment, project work, coursework, non-examination assessment and public examinations.

- Pupils are taught how to quote, reference and compile bibliographies, and how to distinguish legitimate collaboration from collusion or unauthorised assistance.
- Departments communicate task-specific expectations, including whether AI, translation, proofreading, collaborative tools or external help are permitted and how any permitted assistance should be acknowledged.
- Where appropriate, pupils retain evidence of process such as notes, plans, drafts, references, data, version history or practical records, and should be able to explain and defend their work orally.
- Assessment design supports authenticity through staged submissions, dialogue, in-class components, varied task design and opportunities for teachers to know each pupil's normal work.

- Plagiarism, fabrication, undisclosed AI-generated work, unauthorised collaboration or other misrepresentation is addressed through the School's academic and examination procedures. Responses are proportionate, distinguish misunderstanding from deliberate deception, and include education as well as any necessary sanction.

6. Wider character development

The Perse curriculum integrates academic, pastoral and extra-curricular development so that pupils grow in knowledge, agency, character, responsibility, resilience and perspective.

6.1 Cross-curricular knowledge and skills

Departments contribute, where relevant and educationally meaningful, to a shared set of cross-curricular capabilities. These are taught through subject disciplines rather than as detached generic skills, with increasing sophistication and independence as pupils progress.

- Literacy and oracy: accurate reading and writing, subject vocabulary, listening, discussion, presentation, reasoned argument and communication for different audiences.
- Numeracy and data: confident use of number, measurement, graphical representation, statistics, estimation and critical interpretation of quantitative claims.
- Digital literacy: effective and ethical use of digital tools, information evaluation, data handling, creation, communication and online safety.
- Cognitive and learning skills: attention, memory, organisation, planning, metacognition, problem-solving, collaboration and reflection.
- Research and independent investigation: asking worthwhile questions, locating and evaluating sources, designing enquiries, handling evidence, drawing justified conclusions and communicating findings.

Research skills are developed progressively through subject work and structured independent projects, including opportunities in Years 7-10 and, in the Sixth Form, the EPQ or Rouse research programme. Staff leads support coordination in areas such as literacy and communication, digital learning and research, while departments retain responsibility for teaching these capabilities in authentic subject contexts.

6.2 Personal and emotional development

Personal and emotional development is supported through the tutor system, pastoral care, emotional wellbeing and PSHE teaching, assemblies, counselling, peer support and everyday relationships with staff. The School seeks to create an environment in which pupils are known, valued and able to ask for help.

Pupils are encouraged to develop self-awareness, confidence, empathy, resilience and healthy responses to success, pressure and setbacks. In a high-achieving environment, mistakes are treated as a normal part of learning and individual achievements of different kinds are recognised. Support aims to strengthen pupils' agency and capacity to make thoughtful decisions rather than creating unnecessary dependence.

6.3 Physical development

PE and Games form a continuing entitlement across the Upper School, with increasing choice as pupils progress. The programme supports physical health, competence, enjoyment and lifelong participation, while providing opportunities for challenge, representation and competition at an appropriate level.

Through sport and physical activity, pupils develop teamwork, discipline, respect, sportsmanship, resilience and the ability to respond graciously to success and disappointment. Participation is organised safely and pupils are encouraged to find forms of physical activity that suit their interests and needs.

6.4 PSHEE and RSE

All pupils receive age-appropriate personal, social, health and economic education, including relationships and sex education. Curriculum time is complemented by tutorial discussion, assemblies, visiting speakers and wider pastoral work. The programme reflects the School's aims and ethos, responds to relevant contemporary issues, and promotes respect, informed decision-making, healthy relationships, wellbeing, financial understanding and preparation for adult life.

The PSHEE and RSE programme is planned as a coherent sequence, reviewed regularly and delivered by suitably prepared staff. Pupil feedback, safeguarding themes and emerging needs help inform review, while statutory and policy requirements are addressed through the relevant whole-school documentation.

6.5 Religious education and SMSC

The School recognises the importance of a rounded human, social and spiritual education, respecting the beliefs and convictions of all members of the community. Philosophy, Ethics and Religion is taught to all pupils in Years 7-8 and may be continued as an option in Year 9 and an examined subject at KS4. Religious, ethical and philosophical understanding is sustained through assemblies, tutorial material, visiting speakers, PSHEE and other curriculum areas.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society. Across the curriculum and wider School life, pupils develop self-knowledge and confidence, learn to distinguish right from wrong and respect the law, take responsibility and show initiative; understand public institutions, appreciate cultural and religious diversity, respect other people and protected characteristics, and engage thoughtfully with fundamental British values.

6.6 Extra-curricular and enrichment

Extra-curricular participation is an essential part of the broad and self-developing education promoted by the School. Pupils are encouraged to engage in clubs, societies, sport, outdoor pursuits, music, drama, art, academic extension, partnership work, competitions and leadership. Tutors and teachers help pupils identify suitable opportunities and maintain a healthy balance with academic and personal commitments.

The house system, structured Enrichment programmes, educational visits and the School's visiting speaker programme, The 42, widen participation and introduce pupils to contemporary ideas, research and experiences beyond the taught syllabus. Opportunities are designed to be inclusive, are appropriately supervised and regularly reviewed for their educational value and accessibility.

7. Futures and Progression

Futures education helps pupils make informed, ambitious and realistic choices about subjects, further study, training and employment.

The School provides impartial, up-to-date and broad information and guidance at formative stages throughout the Upper School and Sixth Form. Provision is coordinated by the relevant Futures and Progression staff in partnership with tutors, subject departments, the Sixth Form team, universities, employers, alumni and other external organisations.

The School's principles are to:

- enable pupils to understand their strengths, interests and values and to make well-informed subject and pathway choices;
- present a broad range of routes, including higher education, apprenticeships, training, employment and entrepreneurship, without promoting one route as inherently superior;
- challenge stereotypes and widen pupils' understanding of fields, roles and opportunities;
- connect curriculum learning and wider experiences to the knowledge, skills and personal qualities needed beyond School;
- provide accurate, current and appropriately timed information, individual guidance and practical preparation
- review participation, feedback and destination information to improve provision.

A detailed provision is outlined in the School's Careers Guidance and Futures Policy and includes:

- subject choice guidance
- individual advice
- parent information events
- support for UK, overseas and specialist applications
- preparation for admissions tests and interviews
- careers education through PSHE, tutorials and subjects
- profiling and guidance interviews
- employer and alumni encounters
- work experience and volunteering guidance
- application, CV and interview skills
- transition support.

Pupils are encouraged to test assumptions, gather evidence and take increasing ownership of decisions while knowing where to seek expert help.

8. Key related documents

This policy sets the overarching approach. Current operational detail is contained in the following policies, handbooks, procedures and annual publications.

Curriculum and teaching Perse 3-18 Curriculum Overview Quality of Education (Teaching) Policy Teaching Staff Handbook Departmental handbooks and schemes of work Curriculum engagement and options booklets	**Access and inclusion** Admissions Policy and Procedure Equal Treatment Policy Disability Policy Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Policy Special Educational Needs and English as Additional Language Policy Accessibility Plan 2025-2028
Safety and welfare Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Behaviour and Discipline Policy Anti-Bullying Policy Health and Safety Policy Educational Visits Policy.	**Assessment and integrity** Feedback and Assessment guidance; additional academic support procedures; public examination, coursework and non-examination assessment procedures.
Digital learning Acceptable Use of ICT Policy Digital Strategy NEA Policies	**Wider development** Departmental Handbooks Clubs and Enrichment information Career Guidance and Futures Policy Relationships, Education and Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Current approved related documents take precedence in their specific area. Detailed subject offers, option arrangements, period allocations, homework expectations and programme timings are published separately and reviewed regularly.

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