



Curriculum Policy

Duncombe School

Local policy | September 2026

A broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum for all pupils, including those in the Early Years.

Policy owner	Deputy Head Academic
Applies to	All pupils and all school staff
Review cycle	Annual
Previous school review	4 September 2025
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Purpose and school ethos

The purpose of this policy is to outline how Duncombe School provides a curriculum that supports our ethos, fulfils our school aims and enables every pupil to learn and make progress. It applies to all pupils, including those in the Early Years, and to all staff responsible for their education.

We believe that a rich and supportive learning environment helps children to become confident, curious and independent learners. Our curriculum brings together high-quality teaching, meaningful assessment and opportunities to develop academically, creatively, socially and physically.

Our school mission

“Duncombe School will educate the whole child, fostering the individual's highest academic, creative, social and recreational standards within a happy, caring and stimulating environment.”

Our Treetops mission

“Our primary purpose is to support children and parents through the early years of education. Treetops offers a carefully managed induction programme to school life and subsequently a broad and challenging education within a caring and secure family environment.”

Our understanding of the curriculum

At Duncombe, the curriculum means the whole learning experience. It includes taught lessons and the routines, relationships, behaviours, events, activities and wider opportunities that pupils experience each day, week and year.

Curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment work together. What we intend pupils to learn informs our teaching; assessment helps us understand what they have learned and plan their next steps. These elements are underpinned by the school's aims.

Aims and objectives

Our curriculum aims to:

- Develop a lasting enjoyment of learning and interests that extend beyond the classroom.
- Build knowledge, skills and understanding across a broad range of subjects.
- Encourage independent and critical thinking, questioning and thoughtful discussion.
- Develop self-awareness, self-regulation, resilience and confidence without arrogance.
- Help pupils feel secure in trying new approaches, taking appropriate academic risks and learning from mistakes.
- Prepare pupils for the next stage of their education and for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

Statement of intent and curriculum delivery

We are committed to ensuring that every pupil has access to a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum, with appropriate support and challenge. We maintain high expectations while recognising that children have different starting points, strengths and needs.

Our curriculum provides experience of linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. Speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy are central to pupils' learning and are developed across subjects.

We provide full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age. Our curriculum policy, plans and schemes of work take account of pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs, including those with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. They support Fundamental British values and do not undermine them.

The taught curriculum

At Key Stages 1 and 2, our taught curriculum broadly follows, and at times goes beyond, the National Curriculum. Subject schemes of work and lesson planning translate the curriculum into a coherent sequence of learning, helping pupils build on prior knowledge and develop increasing understanding.

Teachers plan learning that is appropriately challenging and accessible. They use assessment to identify what pupils understand, address misconceptions and adapt teaching so that all pupils have the opportunity to make progress.

The curriculum equips pupils with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to move confidently to the next stage of their education and achieve their potential.

Early Years

In Treetops, our curriculum supports children's learning and development within a caring and secure environment. A carefully managed induction helps children and their families make a positive start to school life.

Provision follows the current Early Years Foundation Stage framework. Activities respond to children's developmental stages, interests and educational needs, with particular attention to personal, social and emotional development, physical development, and communication and language.

Children experience learning across the seven areas of the framework: communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development; literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; and expressive arts and design.

Inclusion and assessment

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Our curriculum is inclusive. We recognise that pupils may need different approaches or levels of support to access learning and demonstrate what they know. The Learning Support department, led by the Head of Learning Support/SENCo, works with teachers to support pupils with special educational needs, disabilities or specific learning difficulties.

Teachers take account of each child's developmental stage, communication profile, sensory needs and any agreed support plans, including an EHC plan where applicable. Appropriate reasonable adjustments, adaptive teaching and targeted support help remove barriers to participation while maintaining ambition for each pupil.

Staff work in partnership with parents and carers, and with relevant specialists where appropriate, to understand individual needs and review the effectiveness of support. Further details are set out in the SEND Policy.

English as an Additional Language

Pupils with English as an additional language have access to the full curriculum. Teachers support understanding through approaches such as clear modelling, visual prompts, structured talk and the teaching of key vocabulary and subject-specific language.

We value pupils' home languages and cultural backgrounds. English language acquisition is considered separately from possible special educational needs, with advice sought from the SENCo when concerns arise. Further details are set out in the EAL Policy.

Assessment and Monitoring

Assessment is an integral part of curriculum delivery. Teachers use pupils' responses, discussions and work to check understanding, identify next steps and adapt learning. Assessment should help staff recognise both strengths and areas where further teaching or support is needed.

Quest Progress outcomes are considered alongside classroom assessment, pupils' work and teacher judgement to identify strengths, gaps in learning and next steps. The Assessment and Monitoring calendar sets out the assessment timetable with named subjects and year groups.

Teachers and school leaders use assessment information to adapt teaching, plan support and challenge, and evaluate curriculum provision.

Partnership with families

We recognise the importance of working with parents and carers to support each child's learning. Staff share information about progress and work with families to understand barriers to participation, including language or additional learning needs, so that support is appropriate and consistent.

Personal development and relationships

Spiritual Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven through our taught curriculum, wider activities and daily school life. We actively promote democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, including those with no faith.

Through age-appropriate teaching and experiences, we help pupils to:

- Develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Distinguish right from wrong, respect the civil and criminal law of England, and understand how the rule of law protects wellbeing and safety.
- Accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and contribute positively to the school, local community and wider society.
- Develop knowledge of public institutions and services in England, including an age-appropriate understanding of the separation between government and the judiciary and the independence of the courts.
- Understand how citizens influence decisions through democratic processes and respect the way laws are made and applied.
- Appreciate their own and other cultures, understand that freedom of faith and belief is protected in law, and respect people of different faiths or beliefs, or none.
- Respect other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010, and recognise and challenge discrimination.

Discriminatory or extremist views and behaviours are challenged. We do not promote partisan political views in the teaching of any subject. Where political issues arise in lessons, school-organised activities or the promotion of extracurricular activities, we take reasonably practicable steps to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Relationships and Sex Education and PSHE

Relationships and Sex Education and Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) support our ethos and encourage respect for others. Pupils receive one taught PSHE lesson each week. Learning is reinforced across subjects, including English, Science, PE, History and Religious Education, and may be supported by visiting speakers or staff with relevant expertise.

Relationships and Sex Education forms part of our primary curriculum. Health and wellbeing, personal safety, anti-bullying, economic awareness, age-appropriate learning about alcohol and drugs, and growing up and relationships are addressed through planned provision.

Curriculum planning and teaching must reflect the changes set out in the school's revised Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy, with regard to the revised statutory guidance effective from 1 September 2026 which includes the introduction of RSE assessment. Staff will use the updated policy to guide age-appropriate content, sequencing and resources, including arrangements for working with parents and any applicable withdrawal rights. These changes will be reflected in PSHE plans and relevant cross-curricular teaching.

Enrichment and Responsibilities

Learning beyond the classroom

A wide range of enrichment activities supplements the timetabled curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to participate in art, drama, music, sport and other clubs and activities that help them discover interests, develop skills and build confidence.

Themed days and weeks extend learning and bring the school community together. These may include Book Week, Financial Capability or Money Week, British Science Week, Anti-Bullying Week and activities promoting wellbeing.

Visits to places of interest enrich classroom learning. The programme for Years 3 to 6 includes annually organised visits and residential opportunities, supporting independence, teamwork and responsibility in environments beyond school.

Our wider curriculum also provides opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and contribute to others, including:

- Year 6 prefect responsibilities and the buddy support system.
- Pupil Council and Eco Council participation.
- Charity fundraising and Harvest donations to the local food bank.
- Visits to local care homes and other community activities.
- School trips, residential experiences, extracurricular activities and sport.

Together, these experiences help pupils develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed for life beyond Duncombe.

Roles and Responsibilities

Deputy Head Academic: Oversees the implementation of this policy and leads its annual evaluation. Reviews whether the curriculum fulfils the school's aims, maintains high expectations and supports strong progress and engagement.

All staff: Implement this policy through curriculum planning, teaching and assessment. Provide appropriate support and challenge, monitor pupils' learning and contribute to the review and improvement of provision.

Head of Learning Support/SENCo: Works with staff and families to identify needs, advise on adjustments and support, and review pupils' access to learning in line with the SEND Policy.

Review and Evaluation

School leaders evaluate how effectively the curriculum fulfils the school's aims, promotes aspiration and high standards, and creates engagement and excitement for learning. They consider pupils' progress, participation and experience, using findings to inform improvements. The Deputy Head Academic reviews this policy annually and sooner where changes to provision or relevant requirements make this necessary. Evaluation will include implementation of the revised RSE and Assessment policies and the move to Quest Progress.

Relevant requirements and guidance

The curriculum is planned with regard to the requirements and guidance applicable to Duncombe as an independent preparatory school in England, including the following:

The Education Independent School Standards Regulations 2014 as amended

Department for Education guidance on the Independent School Standards

Early Years Foundation Stage framework for group and school based providers

Relationships Education Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance

Equality Act 2010

The National Curriculum provides a reference for our taught curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2. The school's safeguarding and SEND policies set out the associated guidance and arrangements relevant to those areas.