

# West Monmouth School



## Curriculum Policy

Date Approved by Governors: May 2021

## a) Curriculum Vision

### Context:

Improving education is a national mission set by Welsh Government:

*"Nothing is so essential as universal access to, and acquisition of, the experiences, knowledge and skills that our young people need for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship"* **Welsh Government**

The Curriculum for Wales is the lever with which the Welsh Government aims to improve the life chances of learners in Wales. Each school has been tasked with developing its own curriculum enabling learners to develop towards the four purposes of the curriculum - the starting point and aspiration for every child and young person in Wales:

**Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives**  
**Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work**  
**Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world**  
**Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.**

### West Monmouth School's approach to curriculum development:

Developing a new curriculum is a monumental task. As such, West Monmouth School (WMS) ascribes to four principles which will guide the construction of the new curriculum.

#### 1. Knowledge is important

- In a knowledge-rich curriculum, what we want learners to learn what matters and subject traditions are respected.
- Skills and understanding are seen as part of subjects - there are not generic skills that can be taught independently of content knowledge.
- Acquiring deep knowledge is seen as good in itself - ambitious, ethical and healthy citizens will emerge if they are immersed in a knowledge-rich curriculum. For example, ethical, informed learners should be 'knowledgeable about their culture, community, society and the world, now and in the past.
- Focusing on knowledge brings a level of specificity to the curriculum. We want learners to acquire the significant cultural knowledge that we want our learners to know about the world.
- A knowledge-rich curriculum embraces ideas from cognitive science about how our memory works including ideas about forgetting and retrieving information. A knowledge-rich curriculum moves away from learners simply 'encountering' ideas and moves towards learners moving information into their long-term memory where it can be held and later connected to new learning.

#### 2. The curriculum is interdisciplinary

- We know that there are concepts and ideas which connect across subjects.
- For this reason, it is very important that when developing the curriculum, staff have the opportunity to collaborate across subjects to ensure that each subject curriculum is logical and coherent.
- The curriculum is planned vertically as well horizontally. For example, if science requires students to manipulate the equation for density in year 7, and maths don't introduce this until year 8, do we alter the timings of the introduction of this knowledge? Or do we enable science teachers to work with Skills Leads to deliver this concept in a way that supports students' learning and understanding in maths later on?

### **3. A blended approach to pedagogy**

- Curriculum and pedagogy are linked.
- The development of the curriculum should therefore consider *how* content will be taught.
- In the political world, knowledge-rich curricula are often pitted against those which are learner-centred.
- At WMS, we believe that a great education is about a blended approach not purely about the knowledge of content that is accumulated; it is also about the enacted experience.
- Our knowledge rich curriculum will be packed with opportunities to discuss, debate, create, collaborate, communicate, and perform with confidence and flair with a recognition that learners will be explicitly taught how to do these things.

### **4. Great teaching at the heart**

- There can be no great schools without great teachers.
- You don't have to go far in the literature to read a version of the statement 'quality teaching is the most important factor in raising attainment'.
- Therefore, our curriculum development needs to go hand and hand with effective professional development at all levels which equips our teachers with an understanding of the latest evidence and research and opportunities to translate theory into practice.

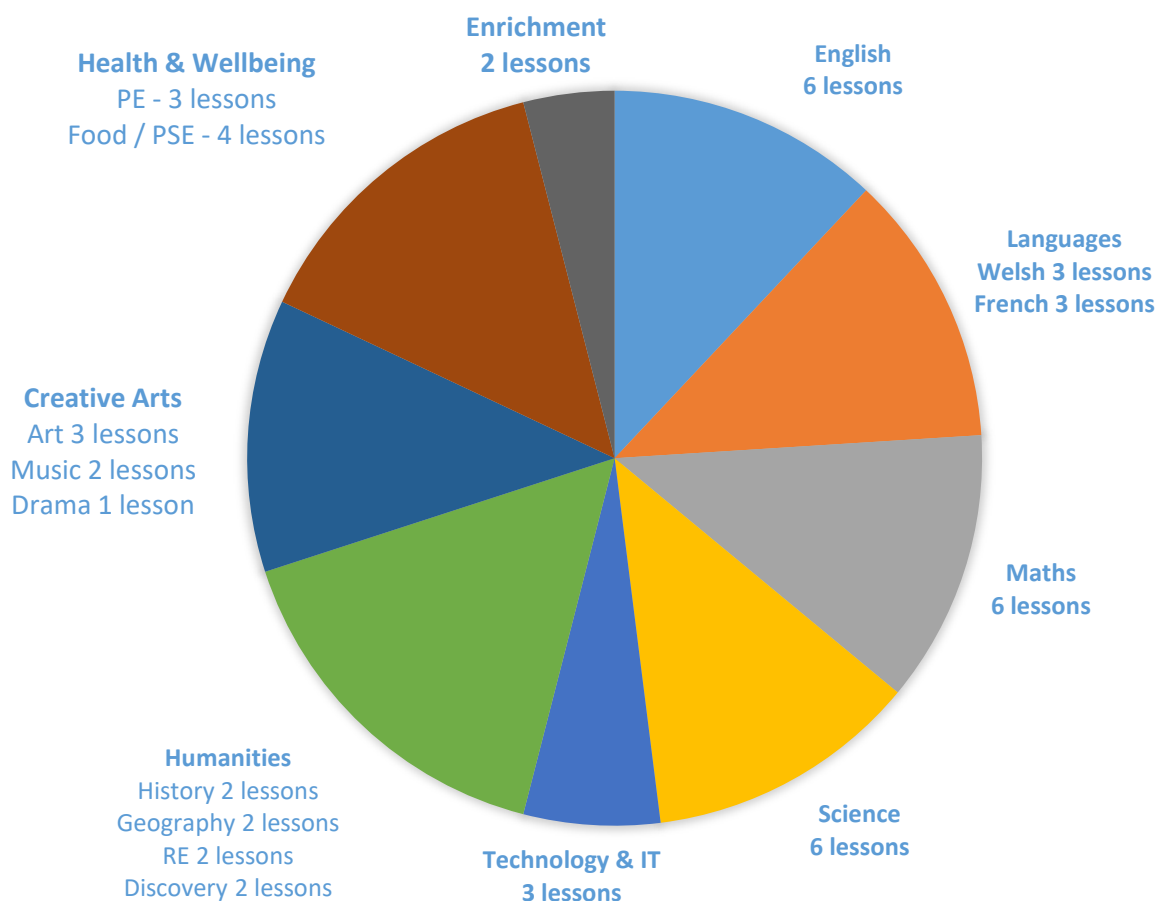
At WMS we need a curriculum and assessment model designed by our community to suit our school and our children. To deliver our curriculum we will need teachers who are as good as the best. This is how we overcome disadvantage, deliver the 4 purposes and develop parity for people in Wales. Our pupils and entitled to this and we can deliver it.

## b) Curriculum Organisation

**Timings of the School Day** – Like most secondary schools we run a two-week, 50 period timetable cycle for pupils. Pupils have 5 lessons and one lunch session each day and each one is one hour long:

<b>Morning Registration / Assembly</b>	8.25 – 8.45
<b>Lesson 1</b>	8.45 - 9.45
<b>Lesson 2</b>	9.45 – 10.45
<b>Morning Break</b>	10.45 – 11.00
<b>Lesson 3</b>	11.00 – 12.00
<b>Lesson 4 – KS3 Lunch</b>	12.00 – 1.00
<b>Lesson 5 – KS4 Lunch</b>	1.00 – 2.00
<b>Lesson 6</b>	2.00 – 3.00

The watch words of our curriculum design at WMS are ‘breadth’, ‘balance’ and ‘inclusivity.’ Our lower school curriculum seeks to give pupils a solid foundation in all areas of learning and experience so that they can discover their own passions and talents before making option choices for key stage 4. It is made up as follows:



There are many links across the subject areas and teachers exploit all opportunities to explore cross-curricular themes and issues. However, all subjects are taught by subject-specialists to ensure that pupils are exposed to the in-depth knowledge and passion of expert practitioners.

**Welsh** – None of our curriculum is currently delivered through the medium of Welsh. However, we encourage and support pupils to develop their Welsh language skills wherever possible and provide opportunities – such as an annual Eisteddfod – for them to explore their Welsh heritage and culture.

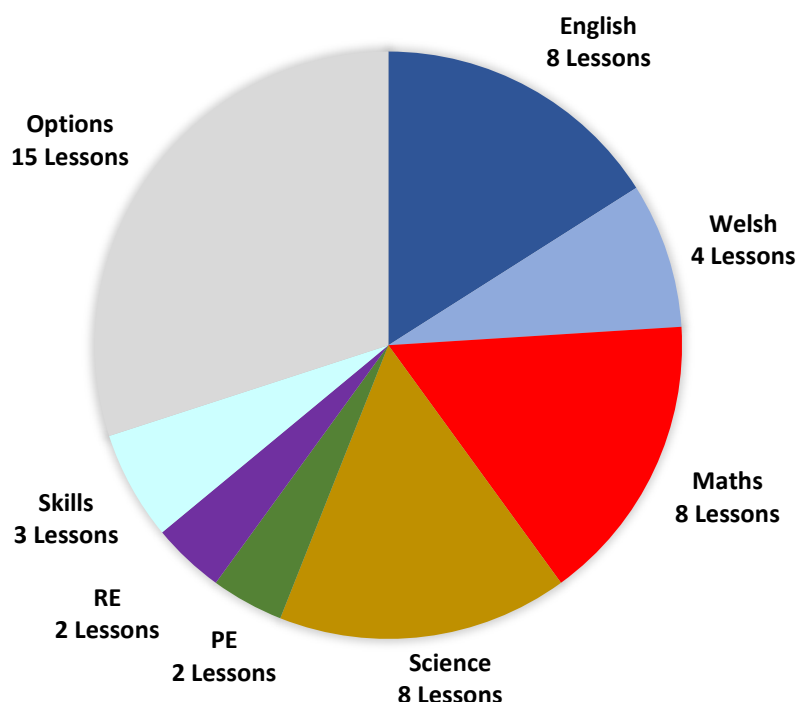
**Religious Education** – We are not a faith school and our RE provision covers the beliefs and practices of a broad range of global faiths as well as encouraging pupils to consider and reflect upon the many moral and spiritual issues facing the world today. Assemblies and tutor sessions will also encourage pupils to reflect on such issues. At parental request, pupils may be withdrawn from all or certain aspects of religious education provision.

**Social & Emotional Learning** – As a school, we are very conscious of our responsibility to educate the ‘whole child’ and to ensure that pupils leave us with the social skills and emotional intelligence to be happy and healthy throughout their lives. To ensure this, personal and social education is delivered regularly to all age groups. Lessons cover a wide range of relevant topics informed by pupil –voice.

**Setting & Streaming** – Traditionally, pupils at WMS have been placed into sets according to ability upon entry in year 7. However, due to the unprecedented disruption experienced by pupils in the last few academic years, we have changed this policy meaning that most pupils will be placed in mixed ability groups. This is in recognition of the fact that, due to the pandemic, pupils across our catchment schools have had very different learning opportunities and that there has been significant variation in pupils’ ability to engage with distance learning. We therefore believe that it would be unfair to group pupils by ability currently and that doing so could add significantly to pupils’ anxieties around the transition to secondary school. Instead of setting, teachers will differentiate work to ensure that pupils of all abilities within classes are challenged appropriately. Across term 1, gaps in pupils’ knowledge and understanding will be identified and plugged so that, by Christmas, we can accurately assess their academic ability and place them in the correct sets for core subjects to continue their learning journey successfully.

**More Able & Talented Pupils** – Pupils identified as being of higher academic ability or as having a talent in a particular area will be encouraged and supported to reach their full potential. Our day-to-day teaching will challenge pupils to extend their thinking and extra-curricular activities will spark their passions and aspirations in a wide range of areas. The MAT Co-ordinator mentors students and seeks out opportunities for pupils to participate in schemes such as The Brilliant Club’s Scholars Programme which allows able pupils to get a taste of university study and life

**The Key Stage 4 Curriculum** – Currently, pupils make their option choices for key stage 4 midway through year 9 and commence new courses at the beginning of year 10. The key stage 4 curriculum is still made up predominantly of compulsory statutory courses as shown below but pupils are able to choose 3 additional subjects which they wish to study to GCSE level or equivalent.



Our current range of option choices is shown below but we keep this offer under constant review in light of pupil voice and also the changing demands of the work place:

Traditional Subjects	Vocational Subjects
Art	Construction
Design Technology	Engineering
Drama	Hospitality & Catering
French	Health & Social Care
Geography	Textiles
History	BTEC Sweet (Personal & Social Development)
ICT	Finance
Music	Public Services
PE	Agored Cymru
Separate Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)	
Religious Studies	

**Careers Education** – This is delivered mainly through the PSE programme at KS3 and the Skills Challenge Certificate at KS4. All KS4 pupils have access to bespoke guidance from the careers adviser who is in school two days each week.