

Dominican College



Curriculum Policy 2024-25

VISION STATEMENT: “Inspiring, Motivating and Empowering Learners”

Our vision is to provide a child-centred, transformative and challenging educational experience, which shapes confident, aspirational, resilient and compassionate people.

Through a holistic approach to education, pupils will be supported and empowered to become critical thinkers, excelling across a wide range of academic and extracurricular areas, building character and developing enduring friendships.

Our pupils will be prepared to embrace the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing world, making a positive contribution to the wider community, while upholding the values of truth, justice, integrity and love.

Mission Statement

“Dedicated to Truth and Respect, Committed to Realising the potential of all.”

In the tradition of our Dominican founders, all our work is informed by our Dominican values:

- **We see** the school as a community centred on Christ and so our values are those of the Gospel and our school motto VERITAS.
- **We acknowledge** the dignity and uniqueness of each individual, made in the image of God.
- **We seek** to base our relationships on mutual trust and respect.
- **We strive** to create a harmonious and safe environment where the gifts of each will flourish.
- **We elicit** the co-operation of our students in the pursuit of truth in all its forms so that they will learn to make informed judgements.
- **We uphold** the ideals of generosity, freedom, tolerance and responsibility in all areas of daily life.
- **We remain** open to the wider world – willing to adapt but always maintaining our Christian values.

Aims

Within the context of a purposeful learning community, and recognising the uniqueness of each individual, we aim to offer a curriculum which enables every pupil to reach her full potential: spiritually, academically, morally, socially, and aesthetically; and ultimately to contribute to society with integrity.

Rationale

The approach to education in Dominican College, ensures the holistic development of each pupil, and prepares them to embrace all the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing world. The educational experience provided, ensures that our pupils grow in confidence, enjoy learning, achieve highly, and are empowered to take their place as leaders in society. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and evolves to meet the needs, aptitudes, and ambitions of all our pupils. It focuses on each learner's needs as well as the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills. Opportunities are provided within the classroom and beyond which promote the full development of each pupil, allowing them to develop as respectful, independent, confident and responsible members of the community.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors of Dominican College have overall responsibility for pastoral and curricular provision in the school. The strategic role of the Board of Governors is to fulfil its functions in relation to the school with a view to promoting the achievement of high standards of educational attainment. They must:

- agree a Curriculum Policy
- facilitate the implementation of the Curriculum
- ensure proper provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Principal

The principal has overall responsibility for implementing school policies agreed by the Board of Governors and for the educational development of pupils and professional development of staff in the school. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that structures are in place which enable each pupil to access the curricular provision to which they are entitled and that the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum are met.

The Principal is responsible for determining, in consultation with the teaching staff, the methods and organisation used to deliver the curriculum. The Principal must monitor and evaluate standards of learning and teaching throughout the school, involving all staff in this process, using data effectively, and report on the outcomes of this process to the Board of Governors.

All staff are recognised as Leaders of Learning and are encouraged and supported to pursue professional development and career progression. The Principal and Senior Leaders will facilitate, where possible, all relevant opportunities for Continuing Professional Development for staff to ensure the highest quality learning experiences for pupils.

Vice-Principal (Curriculum)

The Vice-Principal for Curriculum has overall responsibility for leading the curriculum structures and for the day-to-day implementation of all curriculum policies. The Vice-Principal leads and manages a Curriculum team comprising:

- Senior Curriculum Leaders (Senior Teachers);
- Heads of Department;
- Examinations Officer.

The Vice-Principal (Curriculum) will:

- Be responsible for overseeing the timetable design, construction and maintenance;
- Direct and coordinate the GCSE and A-level Options process;
- Monitor and Review Curriculum provision, taking cognisance of the School Development Plan, the Entitlement Framework and all statutory requirements;
- Oversee the regular review and updating of all curriculum policies in accordance with any relevant DENI circulars;
- Work with the Senior Curriculum Leaders and Heads of Department to ensure that all curriculum issues are addressed in line with the relevant policies and that all pupils experience a progressively sequenced Key Stage 3 curriculum with challenge relevant to their abilities;
- Oversee SIMs data on pupils and liaise with Senior Curriculum Leaders and Heads of Department to ensure follow-up where required;
- Oversee and manage Assessment, Tracking and Reporting systems;
- Produce accurate information using all available, data to inform monitoring and self-evaluation and to support school leaders in raising standards and pupil performance.

Key Stage Leaders

Key Stage Leaders are members of the Senior Leadership Team. Their role is to Lead, Support, Motivate, and Monitor HODs in delivering the highest quality Teaching and Learning experience, supporting the learning, attainment and development of all our pupils. With regard to their Key Stage, they will:

- Work with Heads of Department on the design, implementation and review of Departmental Development Plans;
- Oversee the design, review, implementation and monitoring of the Schemes of Work for each subject;
- Work with HODs to ensure effective Pupil Progress Tracking, Identifying Underachievement and implementing appropriate strategies for pupil support and improvement

Head of Department

The primary responsibility of the Head of Department is to secure high-quality teaching and learning in their subject area and to ensure the highest standards of learning and achievement for all pupils. The work of the Heads of Department and Subject Teachers complement the work of the Heads of Year and Class Tutors, in promoting pupils' academic and personal development. The Head of Department will:

- Provide clear vision, leadership, and direction for the subject, identifying key areas for improvement and planning appropriate action.
- Lead, manage and develop the department to ensure that it achieves the highest standards of

academic excellence.

- Establish a clear, shared understanding of the importance and role of the subject in contributing to pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development, and in preparing pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.
- Support, guide, motivate and empower teachers of the subject, and other staff where appropriate, maintaining high expectations of all staff, promoting good working relationships among teachers in the department and integrating them into a coherent team.
- Take overall responsibility for development, implementation, evaluation and review of the departmental Development Plan, in line with the School Development Plan.
- Analyse and interpret relevant national, local and school data, plus research and inspection evidence, to inform policies, practices, expectations, targets and teaching methods.
- Monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of learning and teaching, the subject curriculum and progress towards targets for pupils and staff, to inform future priorities and targets for the subject in accordance with school policy.

Examinations Officer

The Examinations Officer works ensures the efficient conduct of all matters pertaining to external examinations and qualifications.

Subject Teachers

All teachers are committed to fostering and promoting the Dominican ethos of the school and ensuring that a safe and secure learning environment is created and maintained for pupils. Subject Teachers provide leadership in the classroom and keep their pupils' well-being and attainment as the central focus of their work. They will:

- Set high expectations for pupils' behaviour in class, establishing and maintaining a high standard of discipline and positive working relationships;
- Support and fully implement Whole School and Departmental Policies on Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Reporting;
- Plan and deliver effective lessons which motivate all pupils and ensure appropriate challenge and progress, using a range of appropriate strategies and resources for teaching and learning, which engage pupils and stimulate intellectual curiosity using effective questioning, clear presentation, and appropriate resources.
- Make use of all available data and information regarding pupil progress to agree appropriate targets for pupil attainment;
- Ensure that pupils are motivated and that their potential and value is recognised through acknowledgement of efforts and progress made;
- Implement the Target-Setting Policy to ensure pupils' aspirations are balanced with realistic expectations;
- Provide targeted support for pupils within teaching groups who have additional educational needs, liaising with the SENCO and classroom assistants/ learning support teachers as appropriate;
- Consult with the Head of Department, Heads of Year and Class Tutors, regarding pupils causing concern;

- Ensure that pupils are well prepared for internal and public examinations and that controlled assessments, coursework and internal assessments are completed within whole school and departmentally agreed timescales;
- Provide constructive verbal and written feedback to pupils, parents, HODs, HOYs and Senior Teachers where appropriate regarding pupils' progress;
- Maintain a thorough up-to-date knowledge of the subject and to take account of relevant wider curriculum developments.

Pupils

All pupils are expected to abide by the Pupil Code of Conduct and treat all members of the school community with respect and kindness. They are expected to work diligently, completing all assigned work to the very best of their ability. Pupils are encouraged to have high aspirations and develop habits of independent study, acquiring skills for lifelong learning, building resilience and personal efficacy. Opportunities for teamwork are promoted and pupils encouraged to recognise their own and other's talents and achievements.

There is an effective programme of pupil mentoring where sixth form pupils provide help and support to junior pupils in academic subjects. With the exception of Mathematics in Years 10-12 where some setting of classes takes place to facilitate the varied range of module options in GCSE Maths, all pupils are taught in mixed ability class groups.

Parents

In line with our Dominican Ethos, we recognise parents and guardians as the primary educators of our pupils and aim to promote a positive relationship with them to ensure the very best outcomes and educational experience for all our pupils. We actively encourage parental engagement through Information Evenings and communication regarding Curriculum matters, Annual Parent-Teacher Meetings as well as regular reporting. We engage with parents, seeking their views and feedback on a range of issues as appropriate.

Assessment and Reporting

Teachers set high expectations for all pupils. They will use appropriate data to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work and assessment for pupils of all abilities and aptitudes, including Gifted and Talented pupils, pupils with additional educational needs and vulnerable learners.

In line with the Assessment policy, there is regular assessment of pupils' progress and attainment throughout the academic year, with all pupils sitting formal school examinations at least once a year. Each year group has an annual parent teacher meeting and parents receive a full written report once a year. In addition, Years 8 – 10 receive an interim once a year and Years 11-14 are issued with grade reports mid-way through each term. Pupil progress is closely monitored, and the pastoral team work closely with pupils and parents to support pupils in fulfilling their individual potential.

Careers

We endeavour to equip all our pupils with the self-confidence and skills, which will enable them to be self-aware, make informed and responsible choices in life and appreciate the value of the contribution they can make to society. A well-established Careers programme for Year 8 – 14 pupils, encourages Career

awareness and the development of a Personal Career Plan from an early age. The school hosts a bi-annual Careers Convention and has established strong links with local and international employers and academic institutions. These are utilised to ensure worthwhile work experience and reflect current labour market information.

Additional Educational Needs

School procedures are in place to identify students with additional educational needs. The school's approach for addressing this is embedded within existing good classroom practice and the pastoral care dimension of the school. It is the aim of the school to identify students with additional educational needs as early as possible, providing full access to a broad curriculum and ensuring that all students feel valued and achieve their full academic potential.

Teachers will plan lessons so that pupils with additional educational needs can access the full curriculum where possible and ensure that there are no barriers to learning. Teachers will also support pupils whose first language is not English. Lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities are created to help pupils to develop their English, and to support pupils to take part in all subjects.

There is a Learning Support Co-Ordinator, Learning Support Teacher and Classroom Assistants in the department. We are committed to Continuing Professional Development for all staff with a strong focus on Autism and Dyslexia. It is a central focus of the SEN department to develop an Autism and Dyslexic friendly school by providing quiet spaces, adjustments to the curriculum, lunchtime clubs and friendship groups. Where appropriate, access arrangements are provided in both internal and external examinations for those pupils on the register.

There is a designated Learning Support Area in the school which is staffed by the SEN team and directed by the Senior Teacher for SEN. This provides a nurturing environment where pupils feel supported in their learning.

Curriculum Subjects

The curriculum is designed to ensure that all pupils are equipped with the understanding, knowledge, and skills to make a successful progression through each of the Key Stages. It aims to raise standards, provide stretch, challenge, and support for pupil's learning, always encouraging high aspiration. Technology is used effectively to support teaching and foster pupil engagement and collaboration.

The curriculum is delivered through a range of discrete subjects, with cross-curricular collaboration ensuring that the appropriate skills and learning capabilities are developed in pupils at each key stage. There is a particular focus on the acquisition and development of skills in speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy.

The school makes provision for delivery of the statutory elements of the curriculum in Key Stage 3 & 4 which include Learning for Life and Work, which is made up of Employability, Personal Development, local and global Citizenship and Home Economics (at Key Stage 3), as well as Religious Education. In addition, there is a discrete provision of CEIAG for all year groups with timetabled Careers classes for all year groups.

At Key Stage 4, the statutory requirements are Learning for Life and Work, Physical Education (PE), Religious Education, CEIAG and Developing Skills and Capabilities.

Religious Education is a compulsory part of the Northern Ireland curriculum, although parents have the right to withdraw their child from part or all of Religious Education or collective worship.

The curriculum on offer to pupils at all key stages is regularly reviewed by the Curriculum VP, Senior Leadership Team and Head of CEIAG to ensure suitable pupil progression pathways from school, taking account of up-to-date labour market information and the entrance criteria for a broad range of Higher and Further Education organisations, training and the employment market.

JUNIOR SCHOOL – KEY STAGE 3 (Year 8 – 10)

A broad and balanced curriculum covering all areas of study of the Northern Ireland Curriculum is provided for all pupils. Pupils in Year 8, 9 and 10 study the following subjects:

Art & Design	History	Religious Education
Biology (Year 10)	Home Economics	Science (Year 8 & 9)
Chemistry (Year 10)	ICT	Spanish
Drama	Mathematics	Technology & Design
English	Music	Citizenship
French or Irish	Physical Education	Employability
Geography	Physics (Year 10)	Personal Development

SENIOR SCHOOL – KEY STAGE 4 (Year 11 and 12)

The school offers 27 subjects at GCSE level. All Year 11 and 12 pupils study 9 GCSE subjects (or 10 subjects if Further Mathematics is taken). Religious Education, English Language, English Literature and Mathematics are all compulsory. (Learning for Life and Work is a statutory part of the curriculum, but is not taken for GCSE). In addition, GCSE Italian and Gaelige are offered as After School classes.

Pupils are encouraged to choose a balanced range of subjects and it is strongly recommended that they chose at least one Science and one modern language option. There is a comprehensive GCSE Subject Options programme for pupils and parents to ensure that they are in possession of all the relevant information to enable them to make well-informed and appropriate choices.

Art & Design	French	Mathematics
Biology	Further Mathematics	Media Studies
Business Studies	Geography	Music
Chemistry	Government and Politics	Physical Education
Design and Technology	Health and Social Care	Physics
Digital Technology	History	Religious Education
Drama	Home Economics Food & Nutrition	Science (Double Award)
English Language	Irish	Science (Single Award)
English Literature	Learning for Life and Work	Spanish

SIXTH FORM – KEY STAGE 5 (Year 13 and 14)

The school offers 25 subjects at A-level. Sixth Form pupils follow a two-year course of study taking AS Level examinations at the end of Year 13 and Advanced Level examinations at the end of Year 14. The school is an active member of the North Belfast Area Learning Community (comprising all the Post-Primary Schools in the North Belfast Area) which provides opportunities for collaboration with other schools in the group to enhance learning and widen choices for our A-level pupils. Subject to availability, pupils may, with the agreement of the Principal, choose subjects from the pre-agreed Collaborative block in a partner school within the North Belfast Area Learning Community.

An extensive Careers guidance curriculum alongside, Subject Options events, are designed to ensure that pupils make well-informed A-level choices, enabling them to choose appropriate and fulfilling Career pathways. All pupils must study 3 or 4 A-Level subjects taken from the following list:

Art & Design	Geography	Music
Biology	Government and Politics	Nutrition and Food Science
Business Studies	Health and Social Care	Physics
Chemistry	Health and Social Care (D.A.)	Religious Education
Design and Technology	History	Sociology
Digital Technology	Irish	Spanish
Drama Performing Arts	Mathematics	Sports Studies (BTec)
English Literature	Media Studies	
French	Moving Image Arts	

Pupils who do not take A-Level Religious Studies must take a modular course (one period per week) in Religious Education.

Please note that detailed information on A-level subjects is provided to pupils and parents through the Year 12 Options process which normally takes place in March each year.

The school operates entrance criteria for admission to Year 13 and Year 14 as follows:

CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION TO YEAR 13

General Criteria

Any pupil wishing to study A-levels after completing her G.C.S.E. examinations must achieve the following to be sure of being offered a place in Year 13:

1. A minimum of seven G.C.S.E. Grades A* – C (to include at least four A* – B).
2. A minimum of Grade C in G.C.S.E. English Language
3. A minimum of Grade C in G.C.S.E. Mathematics.
4. The Subject Specific Criteria for each subject to be taken at AS/A2 Level (see below).
5. A good record of attendance in Year 11 and Year 12 (95% +)

Subject Specific Criteria		
Subject	Essential	Desirable
Art	Grade B in GCSE Art	Grade A in GCSE Art

Biology	Grade A in GCSE Biology + Grade B in GCSE Chemistry, or , Grade AA overall in GCSE Double Award Science with a Grade A in the B2 Biology component (See Note 1 below)	
Business Studies	Grade B in GCSE Business Studies	Grade A in GCSE Business Studies
Chemistry	Grade A in GCSE Chemistry or Grade AA overall in GCSE Double Award Science with a Grade A in the C2 Chemistry Component + Grade A in GCSE Mathematics (M4/M8) (See Note 1 below)	GCSE Further Mathematics studied
Digital Technology	Grade B in GCSE Digital Technology + Grade B in GCSE Mathematics	Grade A in GCSE Digital Technology + Grade A in Mathematics
Drama and Theatre	Grade B in GCSE Drama/Theatre Studies	Grade A in GCSE Drama/Theatre Studies Grade B in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature
English Literature	Grade B in GCSE English Literature + Grade B in GCSE English Language	Grade A in GCSE English Literature + Grade A in GCSE English Language
French	Grade A in GCSE French (3 higher papers taken)	
Geography	Grade B in GCSE Geography + Grade B in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature + Grade B in Mathematics	Grade A in GCSE Geography Grade A in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature
Health and Social Care	Grade C in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature	Grade C in GCSE Health and Social Care
Health and Social Care Double Award	Grade B in GCSE Health and Social Care Grade C in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature	Grade A in GCSE Health and Social Care Grade B in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature
History	Grade B in GCSE History + Grade B in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature	Grade A in GCSE History Grade A in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature
Irish	Grade A in GCSE Irish (3 higher papers taken)	
Mathematics	Grade A in GCSE Mathematics (M4/M8 modules) + Grade B in GCSE Further Mathematics	Grade A in GCSE Further Mathematics
Media Studies	Grade B in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature	Grade B in GCSE Media Studies Grade A in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature
Moving Image Arts	Grade B in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature	Grade A in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature

		Grade A in GCSE Art and Design, Drama or Music, Media Studies or History
Music	Grade A in GCSE Music + Grade 5 in a Musical Instrument	Grade 6 in a Musical Instrument Grade 5 in Music Theory
Nutrition & Food Science	Grade B in GCSE Home Economics or Grade B in GCSE Health and Social Care or Grade B in GCSE Single Award Science or Grade BB in GCSE Double Award Science	Grade A in GCSE Home Economics Grade B in GCSE English Language or English Literature
Physics	Grade A in GCSE Physics, or , Grade AA overall in GCSE Double Award Science with a Grade A in the P2 Physics component. + Grade A in GCSE Mathematics (M4/M8) (See Note 1 below)	GCSE Further Mathematics studied
Politics	Grade B in GCSE Politics + Grade B in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature	Grade A in GCSE Politics Grade A in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature
Religious Studies	Grade B in GCSE Religious Studies + Grade B in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature	Grade A in GCSE Religious Studies Grade A in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature
Sociology	Grade B in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature	Grade A in GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature
Spanish	Grade A in GCSE Spanish (3 higher papers taken)	
Sports Studies (BTec)	Grade B in GCSE PE	Grade A in GCSE PE
Technology & Design (Product Design)	Grade B in GCSE Technology and Design or Grade B in GCSE Art	Grade A in GCSE Technology and Design or Grade A in GCSE Art

Note:

1. **Only subjects from those listed above may be chosen.**
2. **Pupils wishing to take main Science subjects (Biology, Chemistry, Physics) must choose at least 2 of the following: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Geography, Nutrition and Food Science.**
3. **Some Universities do not accept Media Studies and Moving Image Arts as two separate subjects.**
4. **If more pupils choose a subject than there are places available, additional criteria will be applied. Priority will be given to pupils who have achieved:**
 - **The Desirable criteria for the subject selected and/or**
 - **A higher GCSE grade in the subject selected and/or**
 - **A higher overall performance at GCSE Level**

CRITERIA FOR PROGRESSION TO YEAR 14

Pupils must achieve a minimum of 3 Grade C passes at AS Level in the subjects they wish to take at A2 Level to be sure of progressing to Year 14. All Year 14 pupils must study a minimum of 3 subjects at A2 level.

Timetable

The school operates a two-week timetable, and the weekly schedule is as follows:

KEY STAGE 3

Time	Period
09:00 - 09:15	Morning Registration
09:15 - 10:05	Period 1
10:05 - 10:55	Period 2
10:55 - 11:15	Break
11:15 - 12:10	Period 3
12:10 - 13:00	Period 4
13:00 - 13:40	Junior Lunch
13:40 - 14:30	Period 5
14:30 - 15:20	Period 6

KEY STAGE 4 & 5

Time	Period
09:00 - 09:15	Morning Registration
09:15 - 10:05	Period 1
10:05 - 10:55	Period 2
10:55 - 11:15	Break
11:15 - 12:10	Period 3
12:10 - 12:50	Senior Lunch
12:50 - 13:30	Period 4
13:40 - 14:30	Period 5
14:30 - 15:20	Period 6

There are 60 periods in the fortnight and time allocation for each subject is in periods as follows:

KEY STAGE 3

Subject	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
English	7	7	7
Mathematics	7	7	7
Science	6	6	6
Religious Education	4	4	4
History	4	4	5
Geography	4	5	4
Spanish	4	4	4
French / Irish	4	4	4
Physical Education	3	3	3
ICT	2	2	2
Art	2	2	2
Drama	2	2	2
Home Economics	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2
Technology & Design	2	2	2
Personal Development	2	1	1
LLW (Citizenship, Careers, Employability) Carousel	2	2	2
Tutor Class	1	1	1

KEY STAGE 4

Subject	Year 11	Year 12
English	9	9
Mathematics	9	9
Religious Education	6	6
5 Additional GCSE Subjects (Pupils' choice)	6 (x 5)	6 (x 5)
Physical Education	3	3
LLW (Citizenship, Employability, Personal Development) Carousel	1	1
Careers	1	1
Tutor Class	1	1

KEY STAGE 5

Subject	Year 13	Year 14
3 or 4 A-level subjects (Pupils' choice)	11	11
Religious Education	2	2
Careers	2	2
Form Period	2	2
Tutor Class	1	1

Extra-Curricular Activities and Enrichment Programme

We believe that participation in extra-curricular activities is crucial to the all-round education of each pupil. It develops self-esteem and interpersonal skills as well as forging friendships and a sense of belonging. We offer a varied programme of extra-curricular activities and encourage all pupils to get involved. There is a wide variety of Educational Visits and Trips available, which enhance our pupils' learning and give them a broader life experience.

Our pupils are encouraged to assume leadership roles and we provide many opportunities for developing leadership skills throughout their school career. Sixth-form pupils are strong role models for the younger pupils and act as mentors providing both pastoral and peer support with academic work. There is a comprehensive programme of enrichment for Sixth-Form pupils which includes training in mentoring and peer mediation as well as leadership programme and training to become Mental Health Ambassadors.

Links to Other Policies

The Curriculum Policy operates in conjunction with other relevant policies:

- Learning and Teaching Policy
- Homework Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Online Teaching and Learning Policy
- SEN Policy
- Pupil Target Setting Policy

Approved by:	Mrs Sheila Crea (Chair of governors)
Date:	May 2022
Last reviewed on:	May 2022, June 2024
Next review due by:	

This policy will be reviewed regularly and amended as appropriate in accordance with any relevant DENI circulars.