



**BROCKWOOD PARK SCHOOL**  
**CURRICULUM POLICY**

Last Review Date	August 2019
Policy endorsed by	The Trustees & Principal
Policy is maintained by	Curriculum Group
ISI reference	A3
Next review date	August 2020
Review body	Curriculum group/Principal

This policy outlines the philosophy underpinning our curriculum, how it is administered, how it is structured, and a brief overview of the different elements of provision.

**Curriculum Philosophy**

The curriculum has been designed to reflect the intentions of the school, which in turn reflect the intentions of the school's founder, J. Krishnamurti. These intentions are:

- To educate the whole human being;
- To explore what freedom and responsibility are in relationship with others and in modern society;
- To see the possibility of being free from self-centred action and inner conflict;
- To discover one's own talent and what right livelihood means;
- To encourage excellence in academic studies;
- To learn the proper care, use and exercise of the body;
- To appreciate the natural world, seeing our place in it and responsibility for it; and
- To find the clarity that may come from having a sense of order and valuing silence.

From these, the particular intentions for the curriculum follow:

- Active and emergent learning that involves students' and teachers' input in uncovering curriculum content;
- Extended immersion in activities of learning and inquiry;
- Development of interdisciplinary activities, projects and portfolios in exploring themes and topics that cut across the fields of science, humanities, arts and craft, and human ecology; and
- Individualised supervision and support for students' investigations and work (allowing contact time for independent learning, peer-supported learning and teacher-supported learning).

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### **Administration of Curriculum**

The curriculum is overseen and managed by the Curriculum Group. The Group is responsible to ensure the smooth running and administration of the curriculum in the school as well as active engagement of the teaching staff with the ongoing questions and points of inquiry underlying the curriculum and education at Brockwood. The Curriculum Group meets every week. This group comprises of Mina Masoumian and Thomas Lehmann

The curriculum is reviewed and further developed by the teachers group which includes all the residential teaching staff. The Teachers Group meet every week

Topics can be raised by students, mature students, teacher apprentices and staff, and are collated into an agenda by the Curriculum Group who ensures that there is an allocated chairperson for the meeting. A nominated minute taker takes minutes at all meetings, which are available under the 'Curriculum' directory on the school staff server.

In cases of particularly significant changes to the curriculum, the Teachers Group may seek students to engage in the development process (for example in the curriculum review of 2015, 6 students worked with the Teachers Group for a week, generating and assessing ideas, and 3 of these students subsequently worked with the Curriculum Coordinator to develop detailed proposals).

### **Structure of Curriculum**

The curriculum contains a number of elements. Students will determine what combination of these elements will be taken at the start of the year in consultation with their academic advisor.

The following description of the curriculum elements is an outline. As the school does not operate on a year group approach, rather than outlining the curriculum based on age groups, it is outlined in terms of elements. Each student will take a unique combination of these through their time in Brockwood.

#### **1. Induction**

The first week and a half comprises induction for all students, with a tailored programme developed each year by staff members, with some elements developed by members of the student 'Core Group'. The intention of the induction is to explore:

- Learning to learn;
- Caring for the place;
- Creating the school together (relating to each other, decision making, studios atmosphere, etc.); and
- Learning about ourselves.

This is often explored through a number of activities, including trips, games, concerts, workshops, and many others.

#### **2. Common Courses**

All students spend one morning a week working on common courses, alongside staff members. These are:

- Inquiry time: a group investigation on pressing issues within the student body, life issues, world issues, and often include an investigation of the founder's teachings and their implications for our daily lives;

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- Human Ecology.

These activities take place as a whole school, or in groups. These groups are of mixed ages to enable different perspectives to be explored, and connections to be developed across the school.

### 3. Core courses

Core courses are designed for younger students (14/15 years old at start of school year) arriving at Brockwood, and include six courses in broad areas of study:

- Humanities (including English for native speakers, History and Geography);
- Art
- Science
- Maths
- Health and Movement (including Human Development as part of the course);
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) (for non-native speakers only)

These courses run for 1 ½ hours a morning on a weekly basis throughout the year and are intended to provide exposure to a range of skills and learning perspectives, whilst meeting the student where they are at in their learning. First year under 16 year olds are required to take these courses unless there are exceptional circumstances, which would be discussed by the teachers group.

### 4. Elective Brockwood Courses

These courses follow on from the core courses in the same broad areas, and are identified as: Elective Art, Elective Science, etc.

These courses are provided to support the student in furthering their study and interest in these areas; to spend time developing a deeper understanding in these areas and their own questions that arise from them, and to develop the learning skills, research and study skills they need for their future studies in life, including exams and portfolios.

These courses are available to all students who are 16+ years or who have completed their first year of core courses. Under 16 years olds in their second year at Brockwood are required to choose a minimum of two of these courses to commit to for the year.

### 5. Topics

Generally topics run for the year, however some topics may be suitable for a term where students will then continue with a personal or collaborative project that developed from what they did in the course. At the end of this there is a presentation of the work.

The time requirements of topic courses will vary from topic to topic, but will usually be a morning once a week. Topics are a space where teachers can offer a course that is cross-curricular, can draw other teachers in for a period of time to share what they know, and that can focus on a broad yet specific topic in more depth. For example past topics have been 'Forest' and 'The Movement of Humans'. Teachers develop the topic, with a clear set of starting activities and questions. The topic then develops as students and teachers work

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together and explore issues that seem most engaging and relevant, and from different viewpoints.

All students except for core students, who will have a full morning schedule, are welcome to take a topic course. Over the course of the year, however, many students will develop their own projects following on from work they have engaged in during a topic course, or from their own explorations. As a result, attendance in the topic courses is expected to reduce through the year.

### 6. Projects

Another core element of our course offering is supporting students to develop their own projects. Students may propose their own project(s) which they will follow through the year (or part thereof) and form a significant part of their learning. Many projects are proposed in the first two weeks of term, and are considered by the Teachers' Group, which determine whether the student will benefit from the proposed project. The TG also takes into account the student's readiness to pursue such a project, their other planned activities, and the likelihood of them completing it. If a project is agreed to, an appropriate teacher or staffmember will be chosen to practically and academically support the project throughout the year, depending on the nature of the project. Students may also propose their own projects at any other point during the year, when the proposal will again be considered by the TG.

Projects can be of two broad forms:

- **Focal Project:** A single project which demands at least 50% of the students' time. These are often undertaken by senior students, and include portfolios.
- **General project:** A project where a variety of things are directed by the students themselves, but none dominates their studies. For example a student may wish to work on their creative writing, pottery work, computer programming and prepare for a GCSE in Geography.

The nature of each project is, of course, dependent on a student and their needs.

Students taking their own projects will be expected to present the process of their learning in February/March, and then give a final presentation in June, which will form an element of their assessment.

A project (of whichever form) is a substantial commitment, and requires exploration, dedication and excellence.

### 7. Extra-curricular Courses

Extra-curricular courses are courses that can be offered by teachers if they have a particular interest or area of learning they would like to share. They run for the year, and generally in the afternoon. Extra-curricular courses can change from year to year, depending on what teachers there are, what they have to offer, and how free they are from other commitments. These have included courses such as: Photography, Journalism, and Textiles.

Pottery and Woodwork fall under the category of extra-curricular courses, but differ in that they have substantial physical resources and work spaces (eg. kiln, tools), and so facilitation has been more consistent over the years.

These courses are important in enriching the curriculum and the learning experience for students who are interested in specialist areas. Where some may have academic elements, these often give opportunities to students who flourish with more hands-on-exploration.

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### **8. Examinations – GCSEs**

In consultation with their academic advisor a student may decide to undertake the independent study of an IGCSE. This will be akin to a project and the student can seek support for this from other students and teachers.

### **9. Examinations – A-Levels**

Brockwood supports a number of A-Level examination courses, with the exact courses available determined by a combination of student demand, suitability of a syllabus, and availability of teachers. Examinations will be offered in the May/June session. We will support students who have a strong reason for taking exams in October/November.

The criteria for students being allowed to take an A-Level course are:

- Any student under the age of 16 at the start of the school year will not be permitted to take an exam course unless there are particularly strong reasons for doing so. We feel that younger students benefit from time to develop an understanding of learning, motivation, and excellence through studying without the pressure of exams.
- Students may take up to three exam courses each year, as it is felt that taking more imposes unnecessary stress on students, as well as significantly limits their opportunities to explore more widely and engage with the common courses. An exception may be if the student has previously studied one of courses they are seeking to take.

The criteria for students being allowed to take an exam (both GCSE and A-Level) are:

- Students will have attended sufficient classes and completed sufficient homework to take an exam;
- Students who are not properly prepared will not be encouraged to take exams, unless they are in their last year and it is their last chance to get some sort of qualification; and
- If there is doubt regarding a student's preparation, they may be asked to take a mock exam and achieve a grade (i.e. greater than unclassified) to be allowed to subsequently sit the exam.

These criteria are designed to ensure that students only take an exam when they are ready, as it can otherwise be a potentially damaging experience.

### **10. Examinations – Pre-A Courses**

Towards the end of the academic year there is a three week period after the topic courses finish that is available for students who are eligible to sit the A-Levels in the following years to attend intensive pre-A courses.

The pre-A courses are primarily designed to ensure that students intending to take specific A-Levels have sufficient knowledge and skills to commence the course. They may also, if the group is ready, commence the A-Level course. Following the three weeks there is additional work given to students to complete in advance of the following academic year.

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### **APPENDIX – A DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY OF THE BROCKWOOD CURRICULUM**

The following is a more discursive description of the curriculum, and how it fits within the broader life of the school. It is appended for information.

Brockwood's staff members have come to the School because they recognise in Krishnamurti's teaching a unique clarity about the value of life and education. Out of these teachings have come the intentions for the School and the curriculum we design and continue to develop.

Brockwood is deeply concerned with a sense of excellence which comes from a depth and breadth of understanding of ourselves and the world around us. This sense of excellence permeates all aspects of our daily life: academic studies, non-academic activities and conduct; hence the study programme here is not a "soft option" as it supports and demands sustained attention, inquiry and diligence.

A vibrant curriculum is one that provides a rich terrain for learning. By uncovering rather than covering a syllabus (where one is used), it is possible to learn with breadth and depth, and to perceive the necessity but also the limitations of acquiring knowledge and skills. While learning can be deadened by merely following a syllabus to deliver knowledge and skills from teacher to pupil; instead learning can be brought alive by attention and inquiry. The curriculum at Brockwood provides occasions for this attention and inquiry.

In what way does an environment inhibit or nurture learning? Does the environment "tell" the student to come in, sit down, and wait for the teacher; or does the environment itself invite initiative and participation? What is the position of the teacher and the student in these scenarios? Is it possible to dislodge the teacher's central position and the students' roles as passive recipients of knowledge and skills? The learning environment and curriculum at Brockwood provide possibilities for initiative, rich participation, independent study, student collaboration, and teacher-to-teacher collaboration. The environment and the curriculum provide opportunities for students and teachers to learn together. The natural beauty of the school campus the gardens and grounds, and the care for the earth program, provide an abundance of resources for outdoor learning.

At Brockwood the process of learning is seen as an end in itself, in and out of the classroom. The academic curriculum is based on the view that the subject matter itself can foster an understanding about learning and about the actualities of our daily lives. Through the study of maths we learn about order; through the sciences we engage with and learn from the world around us, and we can see the place for precise observation and thinking. We learn about ourselves and our values through the study of history. Courses are not limited by disciplinary boundaries and specialties but are integrated within broad areas for the humanities, science and mathematics, arts, social and environmental studies, etc. This allows for the discovery and exploration of questions, themes and projects within and across disciplinary boundaries.

The students' study programme is intended to nurture an integrated human being with breadth and depth of understanding. Conversations are held with each student at the beginning and throughout the year to discover particular needs, interests, and talents, and to work out a balanced programme of study. Classes have an average student teacher ratio of 9:1.

Exam preparation is fully supported and done with a view toward excellence for its own sake. Doing well on an exam can itself be seen as a project by figuring out ways to 'crack' the test so to speak. Thus, exams skills and preparation are given their due importance without conflating them with the breadth and depth of learning that we wish to nurture. Moreover, when there is an ongoing sense of excellence and learning, exam performance is also likely to be enhanced.

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Each school year brings a new curriculum with new questions, projects, activities and opportunities. The list of possible topics, themes and courses varies somewhat each year, according to interests and available resources: not everything may be available in a given year; on the other hand, more things may be offered than are listed.

Throughout the year friends and visitors will enrich the school with workshops and other events. Examples of such workshops are as follows: Bee-keeping, Street Theatre, Concerts, Exhibitions, Open Dialogue, Body Awareness, Business & Human Values, Problem Solving, African Drumming, Language Trips in Europe, Health & Nutrition, Electronic Music, Chinese Cooking, Songwriting, Shakespeare, Creative Writing, Web/Graphic Design, Sound Engineering and much, much more.