



BROCKWOOD PARK SCHOOL
CURRICULUM POLICY

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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-centered 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.

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, studious 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: Inquiry time is the time in the week when the whole school meets and together looks deeply into the intentions of Brockwood, what it means to live together well, and other life issues. Inquiry Time often includes an investigation of Krishnamurti's teachings and their implications for our daily lives. Topics are chosen by students and staff who meet earlier in the week to discuss what is most relevant for the community at that time. Examples of topics include: relationships, authority,

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responsibility, body image and sexuality. Inquiry Time runs for half a morning every week.

- Human Ecology: Every student is required to take this programme, which is concerned with the exploration of our place in the natural world. The course runs for half a morning every week and has three aims:
 - to learn how to grow organic fruit and vegetables in our one-acre walled vegetable garden;
 - to learn about local and global environmental issues and reflect on their root causes;
 - to learn what it means to be in direct contact with nature — relating to it with the whole body.
- Sports: Physical activity plays an important role in the Brockwood curriculum. Twice a week, in the afternoon, the whole school (students, mature students, teacher apprentices and staff) participates in various sports and physical activities. Currently, the most popular (team) sports at Brockwood are football and Ultimate Frisbee but, throughout the year, other games are offered as well, such as badminton, basketball, volleyball, cricket and tennis. Apart from these, we also offer a range of physical fitness activities, such as yoga, dancing, hiking, swimming, running, movement and games. Our facilities include a full-sized football pitch, a combined tennis and basketball court, an outdoor swimming pool (only open in summer) and some indoor spaces for dance, movement and yoga, as well as a small indoor gym.

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)

During the first term of the Core programme, students will be involved in a variety of mostly hands-on/experiential learning activities each week. This gives students exposure to different areas and establishes a closer contact with many of our teachers. As one of the aims of these weeks is to help our younger students *land* at Brockwood, we are calling this our *Core Landing programme*. Writing and journaling will be a key part of each week, ensuring that students develop their English skills and helping them to reflect on the experiences they have had. The first term ends with two weeks of transitioning to the above five Core courses, which will then proceed during the second and third terms.

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The five Core 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 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

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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. Co-curricular Courses

Co-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.

8. Examinations – GCSEs

As an intentional school Brockwood does not offer GCSEs. This enables the school to provide a different kind of education, with less pressure to take exams especially in the early years, and less pressure to follow a specific syllabus. Another reason is to allow students to have exposure to different subjects and areas in their first year through the Core courses and to build their timetable around the areas they want to explore further through Elective and Topic courses (after their first year). These Brockwood courses include elements of teacher or self-assessment to ensure students' learning and progress without the pressure of standardised exams. This is more in line with the unique education offered at Brockwood Park.

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.

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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.