



**BROCKWOOD PARK SCHOOL**  
CURRICULUM POLICY

Last Review Date	August 2021
Policy endorsed by	The Trustees & Principal
Policy is maintained by	Curriculum Group
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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-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, Thomas Lehmann and Tom Power.

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, volunteers that support teaching 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 student 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.);
- Learning about ourselves;
- To build a challenging and nourishing program of study for the year.

This is often explored through a number of activities, including trips, games, concerts, workshops, and many others. During the induction period, each student will build their own unique program of study for the year in consultation with their student advisor and with support from returning students, class fairs, presentations and the Advisor Manual.

#### **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, volunteers 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;
- Art;
- Science;
- Maths;
- Health and Movement (including Human Development as part of the course);
- English (Engage for non-native speakers and Explore and Extend for those with increasing ability).

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. Brockwood Courses**

These courses cover a wide range of disciplines from which a student can build their learning program for the year. These courses are available to all students who are 15+ years or who have completed their first year of Core courses. We make a distinction between academic and hands-on courses to support student advisors in ensuring their advisees get a balance of studies on their timetable in support of the first intention of the school.

#### **4.1 Academic Courses**

These courses are an amalgamation of last year's Elective and Topic Courses covering a wide range of disciplines. They are non-exam courses with the exception of English Extend (which supports the IGCSE in English Language) and Maths (which supports the IGCSE in Mathematics). They run in the mornings and are allotted 1½ hours/week of contact time. Academic Courses being offered this year are:

- Computer Science;
- Humanities;
- Spanish;
- The History of Philosophy and Religion;
- Science;
- Global Issues;
- Maths;
- Patterns and Complexity.

#### **4.2 Hands-on Courses**

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. There are no examinations within these courses and they allow students to progress on to a range of projects and/or creative examination courses in subsequent years. Hands-on Courses being offered this year are:

- Fitness and Movement;
- Life Skills (such as cooking, gardening and maintenance)
- Arts and Crafts which is sub-divided into:
  - Photography;
  - Graphic Design;
  - Pottery;
  - Fine Art;
  - Woodwork.

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### 5. English

Almost every student at Brockwood joins an English course either as a compulsory, year-long component (e.g. for EAL learners in English Engage) or for a part of the year. All new students and some returners (as selected by the English department) are given a written and verbal task during the Induction. From these tasks, EAL students and those capable of sitting English Extend IGCSE are identified and their names shared with the student advisors. The provision for English at Brockwood is outlined below:

- **Engage:** for EAL students who are beginning their learning in English – these students must sit 2 classes/week each of 1½ hours.
- **Explore:** a project-style course for students with intermediate English who want to study English in a collaborative way.
- **Extend:** a more analytical course, supportive of the IGCSE English 1<sup>st</sup> Language course. Some students will elect to sit the IGCSE and others may not.
- **Expand:** a course designed for A-Level skills support and for those interested in more vocational English such as the editing of the school magazine, The Brockwood Observer.

### 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. Examinations – (I)GCSEs

Brockwood does not offer (I)GCSEs with the exception of English Language and Maths. 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

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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 Brockwood courses (after their first year). These Brockwood courses include elements of teacher and self-assessment to ensure students' learning and progress without the pressure of standardised exams, in line with the unique education offered at Brockwood Park. On application to higher education, for a number of institutions, a minimum standard of English and Maths are required. For institutions in the UK, this is usually communicated as a minimum requirement in (I)GCSE Maths and English although, as an international school, this is not usually required. However, in support of access to higher education, we made the decision to allow students to supplement Brockwood Maths and English Extend so that they could sit the IGCSE examination at the end of 1 year. The courses have been designed to facilitate this supplementation but emphasis is placed on the students to cover the additional practice required for success at IGCSE.

### **8. 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 (I)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.