

BROCKWOOD PARK SCHOOL

CURRICULUM POLICY

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Table of contents

Curriculum Philosophy.....	2
Administration of Curriculum.....	3
Structure of Curriculum.....	4
1. Induction Period.....	4
2. Common Courses.....	5
3. Brockwood Courses.....	7
4. English.....	9
5. Projects.....	9
6. Examinations – A levels.....	10
Compulsory School Age.....	11
Assessment and Monitoring at Brockwood.....	12
1. Non-Exam Courses.....	12
2. Exam Courses.....	13
3. Learning Journals.....	13
Inclusion of All Students.....	14
1. English as an Additional Language (EAL).....	14
2. Students with Specific Education Needs (SEN).....	15
Careers Guidance.....	15
Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).....	15

Curriculum Philosophy

This policy outlines the philosophy underpinning our curriculum, how it is administered, how it is structured, and an overview of the different elements of provision. As a small international school we have built a unique, international curriculum which allows students to learn about the whole of life, in the spirit of freedom from fear, authority and comparison.

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 following intentions for the curriculum emerge:

- Active and dynamic learning that involves students' and teachers' input;
- 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 language, mathematics, science, humanities, arts and crafts and design; and

- Individualised supervision and support for students' investigations and work (allowing contact time for independent learning, peer-supported learning and teacher-supported learning)

Administration of Curriculum

The curriculum is overseen and managed by the Curriculum Group. The Group is responsible for ensuring 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 Mina Masoumian and Tom Power.

In addition, weekly meetings are held for all staff at which curriculum matters are discussed. All staff contribute, through feedback and discussion, to the curriculum. Topics can be raised by students, volunteers that support teaching and staff, and are collated into the agenda by the Curriculum Group who also inform the chairperson. A nominated minute taker takes minutes at all meetings. These are available on the Staff Drive.

Structure of Curriculum

The curriculum contains a number of courses and activities, some of which will be included in all students' timetables whereas others can be chosen depending on age and interests. Students will determine what combination of these courses and activities will be taken at the start of the year in consultation with their student adviser. Each student will take a unique combination of these and include it in their timetable for the year; this results in a unique timetable for each student. This individualised and adaptable approach is designed to give students real agency in their learning as they hold significant responsibility for their own learning. In support of this, as well as the journey of the students through the academic year, students can apply to change courses as the year progresses. This process involves discussions with teachers, parents, student advisors and the curriculum team and allows us to take into account the dynamic nature of learning for individual students within the year.

Each year, the timings for the different learning phases are as follows:

- Induction period – 10 days (September)
- Classes – 29.5 teaching weeks (we aim to complete exam course content by the Spring Break which gives 22 weeks to cover this content). These weeks are divided as follows:
 - Winter term 1st half - 6.5 weeks
 - Winter term 2nd half - 5.5 weeks
 - Spring term 1st half - 5 weeks
 - Spring term 2nd half - 5 weeks
 - Summer term – 7.5 weeks
- Activity week – 1 week
- End-of-year activities – 3 days

1. Induction Period

The first week and a half of the school year comprises an induction period for all students, with a tailored programme developed each year by staff members and with some elements developed by senior students. The intention of the induction period 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;
- Conducting a baseline assessment of all new students (and some returning ones) in English, Maths and other subjects, and;
- To build a challenging and nourishing program of study for the year.

These themes are explored through a number of activities including trips, games, concerts, workshops, presentations 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 Student Advising Manual.

2. Common Courses

All students complete the Brockwood Common Courses each year, alongside staff members. These are:

- Inquiry time:
 - *1 x 1hr 20min session each teaching week*
 - 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, responsibility, body image and sexuality.
- Human Ecology:
 - *1 x 1hr 20min session each teaching week*
 - Human Ecology is concerned with the exploration of our place in, and responsibility for, the natural world. The course has three aims:
 - to expose students to activities related to looking after the school grounds and growing 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, and;
 - to learn what it means to be in direct contact with nature.
- Sports:
 - *3 x 2 hour sessions each week*

- o Physical activity plays an important role in the Brockwood curriculum. Three times a week, in the afternoon, the whole school (students 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.
- ATWAM: ‘Another Time We All Meet’
 - o *12 x 1hr 20min sessions throughout the first 2 terms*
 - o This is an essential part of life at Brockwood and is one of the ways in which we deliver our PSHE and Relationships and Sexual Health programmes (see the *PSHE/RSE Policy* for more details). At other times, we invite external speakers to come and present to the students in line with our *Careers Guidance Policy*.

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. Brockwood Courses

1-2 x 1hr 20min session(s) each teaching week

These courses cover a wide range of disciplines from which a student can build their learning program for the year. They have been built by the teaching staff at Brockwood as a response to the challenges we face in the world, the interests and experience of the teaching staff and the feedback and questions from the students. As such, they represent an extremely agile way to adapt to the changing needs of a school curriculum in a dynamic and changing world.

These courses are available to all students and are assessed throughout the year and work shared during the Class Showback at the end of the summer term. There is no public formal summative assessment in line with our intention to foster the spirit of freedom from comparison. 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.

3.1 Academic Courses

These courses cover a wide range of disciplines. Academic Courses being offered this year are:

- Discovering Humanities;
- Investigating Humanities;
- Spanish;
- Mind and Life;
- History of Philosophy and Religion;
- Exploring Science;
- Science Through the Ages;
- Ecosystems;
- Global Issues;
- Exploring Art
- Extended Art
- Foundational Maths
- Advanced Maths, and;
- Exploring Maths.

3.2 Hands-on Courses

These courses are an essential part of the curriculum and we do not differentiate the value of any part of the curriculum. Where some may have academic elements, these often give opportunities to students who flourish with more hands-on-exploration. There are no public summative 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:

- Health and Movement (one way in which we deliver the PSHE/RSE curriculum – see *PSHE/RSE Policy*);
- Fitness and Movement;
- Life Skills (cooking, gardening and maintenance);
- Drama;
- Photography;
- Graphic Design;
- Pottery;
- Woodwork; and
- 3D Design.

4. English

Almost every student at Brockwood joins an English course. All new students and some returners (as selected by the English department) are given a written and verbal task during the Induction period. From these tasks an initial list of proposed classes is created and shared with the student advisors. During the rest of the induction period, the interests and wishes of the students are then mixed in and the classes set for the year. The provision for English at Brockwood is outlined below:

- **Engage:** for EAL students who are beginning their learning in English – these students attend 2 classes/week each of 1hr 20mins.
- **Explore:** a project-style course for students with intermediate English who want to study English in a collaborative way.
- **Extend:** a more analytical course exploring the technical aspects of the English Language as well as a deeper dive into a number of key texts.
- **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.

5. Projects

From the early days of the school, students have been able to propose their own independent project which they will work on throughout the year (or part thereof). Projects are proposed in the first two weeks of term and are considered by the staff, student advisor, project coordinators and Curriculum Group, who determine whether the student will benefit from the proposed project. They also take 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, the student will be allocated time in which to work on their project and they will be added to the weekly project support session, run by the 2 project coordinators. Students may also propose their own projects at any other point during the year.

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.

6. Examinations – A levels

2 x 1hr 20min sessions each teaching week

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 are offered each summer.

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 A level course unless there are particularly strong reasons for doing so. We feel that younger students benefit from time to develop an understanding of their own learning, motivation, and excellence through studying without the pressure of exams, and;
- 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 limiting their opportunities to explore more widely and engage with the common courses. An exception may be if the student has previously studied one of the courses they are seeking to take.

The criteria for students being allowed to take an exam 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. Clear guidelines are given to students about the necessary number of hours required to successfully complete an A level course and the requirement here for significant levels of self-directed learning.

In some specific courses, one of the two 1hr 20min sessions will be a supervised self-study session using an excellent online learning platform.

Compulsory School Age

Students who are under 16 years of age on 1st September of any school year are considered of compulsory school age and are required to study a broad curriculum. During the student course selection process which takes place during our annual induction period, students in this category must pick at least 1 course from each of the following areas:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- Humanities
- Art and Music

This course selection process is facilitated by regular meetings with student advisors, presentations to the whole school and our annual course fair alongside more spontaneous discussions with older students and staff. Students and their parents are also given copies of our Student Advising Manual which is updated annually. This manual gives details of the courses on offer at Brockwood as well as guidance for students of compulsory school age.

For our older students (above compulsory school age), we have, since the founding of the school, pioneered a dynamic and holistic curriculum that incorporates a wide range of options for learners appropriate to their needs. Some students choose to follow a more traditional A level route, as described above, and others choose to mix these with Brockwood courses and/or individual projects. Each student will consult their student advisor during the induction period (and throughout the year as required) to ensure that their timetable allows them to learn and make progress and to prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences in society here in the UK and the wider world.

Assessment and Monitoring at Brockwood

Assessment is a vital tool for finding out if learning is taking place, what activities support this and to use this information to plan teaching so that students can progress in their understanding. In a number of areas, this is done using retrospective schemes of work. Class planning is nimble and lessons are often adjusted week to week based on the needs of the students (including EAL and SEN students) and the range of different aptitudes and interests within a class. As a very small school, teachers are often the only members of their department and as such, throughout the year, regularly monitor the progress of students. The curriculum team further monitor teaching and learning in a number of ways, including:

- Classroom observations;
- Learning walks;
- Book scrutiny;
- Our regular ‘Curriculum Window’ item in our weekly staff meetings;
- Attending school council meetings;
- Termly review meetings with non-residential staff, and;
- Annual review meetings with residential staff.

1. Non-Exam Courses

At Brockwood, assessment in non-exam courses is an ongoing process and may take many forms, for example verbal feedback, mini-quizzes, class presentations, submitted work and tests. The curriculum team manages an assessment overview sheet which teachers update each term so that trends in learning, both of understanding and in skills, can be seen. In addition to this, our weekly staff meeting agenda has a standing item where specific students of concern or of note can be raised.

Each year, the students present their work from each non-exam class at the Class Showback. This is a great opportunity to give and receive feedback on student work and to reflect on the learning in the school.

2. Exam Courses

Students enrolled on exam courses will usually be assessed through regular progress checks and mock exams. In addition, due to the small sizes of the classes, students will usually have 1-2-1 time each class with the teacher where a more details and nuanced assessment of the student can be made. We also conduct a progress check just before the first half term break where students can reassess their progress. It may be, at this stage, changes need to be made to a student timetable to ensure that their program is appropriate to their needs.

3. Learning Journals

A learning journal is a collection of notes, observations, thoughts and other relevant materials built-up over a period of time. Its purpose is to support learning through the process of writing and/or drawing and reflecting on learning experiences. It can also demonstrate key skills to future employers and/or universities that students may want to apply to.

A learning journal helps students to be reflective about their learning. This means that their learning journal is not only an observational account of what they do or have done, but also an opportunity to explore and document their understanding, questions, confusions and challenges as they go along. They will look at not just how and why they did what they did, but actively explore what they now observe about what they do or have done. It is an active process: asking themselves questions and seeking out relevant information to aid their understanding.

Anyone can build a learning journal but it is especially important for older students who are not studying for exams. If this is the case, students are encouraged to timetable 1 Study Hall each week to build their journal. They can get help from the Study Hall staff, their SA or from the Learning Journal topic on the Study Skills Google Classroom.

Inclusion of All Students

The curriculum at Brockwood is available to all students, regardless of their age, aptitude or need. As an international school, we are lucky to have a wide range of different cultures, faiths and beliefs amongst our staff and student body each year and, as such, can engage in a

vibrant and relevant discussion where mutual respect and tolerance are naturally promoted. All students can attend our weekly school council (called The Forum) where views are shared and students can speak openly and honestly about their life here. Further details about inclusion can be found in the school *Equality and Diversity Policy*.

1. English as an Additional Language (EAL)

All EAL pupils are entitled to a full programme of study at Brockwood and all teachers have a responsibility for teaching English as well as other subject content. Access to learning requires attention to words and meanings embodied in each curriculum area. Meanings and understanding cannot be assumed but must be made explicit. Language is central to our identity and students can take part in our weekly language tables where they can speak their home language or learn from others and share their home culture.

Although many pupils acquire the ability to communicate on a day-to-day basis in English quite quickly, the level of language needed for academic study is much deeper and more detailed and requires continuing support. This directed support is assigned as follows:

- During the student recruitment process, applicants are asked to submit a piece of written English and then go through 2 spoken interviews;
- Students are assessed during the induction period on their speaking, writing and listening in English, and;
- Based on these assessments and alongside feedback from student advisors, the English teachers will assign students to English groups as listed above.

The students identified as EAL from this process are shared with the staff body who then ensure that lesson planning takes into account their needs. This process is reviewed weekly at the staff meeting and termly through conversations between student advisors, the curriculum team and the parents of students.

Throughout the year, concerns can be raised by class teachers, students advisers, students or parents and support can be put in place, coordinated by the curriculum team.

2. Students with Specific Education Needs (SEN)

The curriculum at Brockwood is accessible to all students with SEN. The SENCO provides individual education plans for all diagnosed students as well as regular training and update sessions in the weekly staff meeting. Details of the provision for SEN students can be found in the *SEN Policy*.

Careers Guidance

Brockwood has a dedicated careers guidance program called 'Life After Brockwood'. Details of this can be found in the *Careers Guidance Policy*. In addition to this, the dynamic nature of a number of our non-exam courses (such as Global Issues, Ecosystems, Human Ecology, Inquiry Time and ATWAM) mean that students are exposed to a range of up to date guidance on careers through the curriculum.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

We have built an extensive and collaborative PSHE/RSE program over the last few years. Details of this can be found in the *PSHE/RSE Policy*.