

Date: 12|01|2022

Dear Parents and carers,

Curriculum Review

As we start the new term, I want to update you on the curriculum review that has been underway since September.

Quick Read

- Last term we carried out a review of the way we organise subject teaching at Sydney Russell.
- In the primary phase, we are making no major changes.
- In the secondary phase, we will be moving to students picking their subject preferences during Year 9, rather than Year 8 as they do now, starting with the current Year 8 who will pick their preferences next year.
- In the Middle Band in Years 7, 8 and 9, History and Geography will be taught separately from now on, rather than as part of Literacy Focus lessons.

Further Detail

At Sydney Russell we are determined to ensure all our young people are provided with a world class education. Therefore, one of my first actions as Acting Principal in September was to begin reviewing our curriculum model to ensure it meets that ambition. Our current curriculum is incredibly strong, however no model is perfect and there are some improvements which we will be making going forward.

In the primary phase we are confident that our curriculum is strong and ensures pupils have a broad and balanced learning experience which is well-resourced and carefully delivered to make certain pupils in all year groups achieve good outcomes. Leaders continue to reflect on the provision and work with colleagues in the secondary phase so that the sequencing and progression of the curriculum effectively builds on prior knowledge, understanding and skills at each stage of our students' learning journey.

In the secondary phase, for a number of years our students have picked their GCSE preferences in Year 8. Our rationale was to use Year 9 as a gateway year where they can gain a valuable depth of understanding in subjects they will study in Year 10 & 11 while still experiencing a broad and balanced curriculum.

However, the educational landscape and demands of the national curriculum have changed significantly over time and in this context, we now feel it would be beneficial to extend Key Stage 3 to include Year 9 and for GCSE curriculum to begin in Year 10 which will take effect from September 2022.

Therefore current Year 8 students will not make their GCSE preferences until next academic year (2022-23), with the exception of their MFL preference which they will do later this term. This does not affect our current Year 9 students who will continue in their GCSE subjects which they began in September.

In Key Stage 3 Middle Band, students had studied History and Geography in their Literacy Focus lessons through an integrated curriculum. We felt that a more explicit focus on History and Geography was needed to ensure that all students clearly understood their learning journey in these subjects.

Therefore, this term the curriculum for History and Geography in Middle Band has move to discrete lessons for these subjects each week, taught by their Literacy Focus teacher. This approach will combine the best of both worlds to ensure that students gain more depth of understanding in these subjects whilst also ensuring they can access the curriculum through strategies tailored for their needs.

Should you have questions regarding these changes, please send an email to office@sydneyrussellschool.com for my attention and I will contact you.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clare Cross', with a large initial 'C' and a wavy line extending to the right.

Clare Cross

Acting Principal