



Durham  
Cathedral  
Schools  
Foundation



Durham School  
Year 7-9

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# Introduction



## The Year 7–9 Curriculum

Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils at Durham School are offered a challenging, stimulating curriculum designed to stretch their capabilities. Within our school environment they will develop the time management, communication and study skills required to set them on the road to successful independent learning in the future.

Beginning in Year 7, each pupil is assigned to one of six Houses where they will continue to build strong relationships with their peers under the watchful eyes of their tutor and Housemaster or Housemistress. The House staff will offer regular guidance, assisting with organisation, academic and pastoral support.

Our pupils will find opportunities for both leadership and participation in many different fields; musical activities, drama productions, sport and numerous clubs and societies are a feature of life at Durham School.

## The Year 7–9 Philosophy – ‘Learning to Learn’

Years 7–9 at Durham School provide an opportunity for our pupils to begin their journey as learners. Our philosophy revolves around empowering our pupils and helping them fulfil their potential in three key areas:

In order to facilitate their development, our pupils take part in a programme of events running throughout the academic year, designed to enhance their key skills in critical thinking, team working and public speaking.

‘Learning to Learn’ events are interwoven within the normal curriculum and focus on the following core areas; problem solving, enterprise, debating and presentation skills and global awareness. The programme allows pupils to gain exposure to topical issues and guest speakers as well as developing their research and presentation skills, both as individuals and as part of a larger group.

# The School's aim is to develop our pupils' capabilities as follows:

## Core

### Literate

Reading and comprehension, clarity in writing, speaking and presenting

### Numerate

Use of numbers to support reasoning, analysis and logical thinking

### Research

Find, retrieve, record and use digital media to produce, network and create

## Personal

### Collaborate

Participate and work as a team to develop, produce and create

### Self-Manage

Persistence, initiative and organisation

### Emotion

Self-awareness, leadership and empathy

## Thought

### Critical

Apply, analyse, prioritise, infer and evaluate

### Reflective

Respond to feedback and generate self-targets for the future

### Creative

Develop new lines of thought, take risks to challenge assumptions, develop new ways of doing things



# Assessment in Year 7-9

All our Year 7 pupils and our new entrants to Year 8 will undertake a MidYIS (Middle Years Information System) test upon their arrival at the school. The MidYIS test, developed by Durham University and utilised by schools throughout the country, is designed to establish our pupils' underlying raw learning potential. Lower School teachers can then track the progress of their pupils against the baseline data provided by the test and provide all the support and guidance necessary.

Our admissions process includes entrance assessments in Maths and English, as well as verbal and non-verbal reasoning along with the MidYis test.

The data collected acts as a baseline for the minimum expectations of our pupils' performance. There is greater emphasis in Year 7 and 8 on attitude to learning (ATL) grades and these are awarded each half term for both classwork in all subjects and prep for those subjects that set it.

If pupils have a prior entitlement to access arrangements for exams and tests this needs to be discussed with the Head of Learning Support. We can provide pupils with

extra time and allow the use of a pupils' own laptop for in class assessments in Year 7 and 8.

During Year 9, pupils will undergo fresh baseline testing and also begin learning GCSE course material in certain subjects. This allows for pupils to acclimatise to GCSE assessment standards whilst continuing to hone the learning and study skills instilled in Years 7 and 8. Assessment of CAL grades is completed every half term as the focus moves more towards academic outcomes whilst maintaining the emphasis on ATL and its impact on learning. ATL grades continue to be awarded every half term.



# Durham School Curriculum Plan 2024/25

## Year 7–8 From September 2024

Year	Setting, Branding, Core and Options	Subject	2 Week Lesson Allocation [60]
7	<b>Mathematics, English, and Latin are set across the whole year</b>	Mathematics	6
		English	7
		French	5
		General Science	6
		Geography	3
		History	3
		RPE	3
		Art	2
		Design	2
		Computer Science	2
		Latin	3
		Music	2
		Drama	2
		PE	2
		Games	8
		LWE	1
		Contemporary Studies	1
Assembly/Chapel	2		
8	<b>Mathematics, English, French, and Latin are set across the whole year group</b>	Mathematics	7
		English	6
		French	3
		Second Language	3
		General Science	6
		Geography	3
		History	3
		RPE	2
		Art	2
		Design	2
		Computer Science	2
		Latin	3
		Music	2
		Drama	2
		PE	2
		Games	8
		LWE	1
Contemporary Studies	1		
Assembly/Chapel	2		



# Year 9 Option Subjects

Year 9 pupils are given autonomy and choice in the direction they wish their studies at Durham School to take them. Options subject choices are offered are: Art, Classical Civilisation, Design, Drama, Computer Science, Latin, and Music. The breadth of these creative, practical and academic subjects allows pupils to make an early option choice in Year 9, focusing on their strengths and interests. Making these choices based on interest and ability allows Year 9 pupils the opportunity to engage with a

curriculum pathway more suited to their individual needs. When pupils come to selecting their GCSE options there is no stipulation that they need to already have studied a particular option subject in Year 9. The study of these subjects provides a foundation in the subject, gives them a flavour of the content at GCSE and many pupils will inevitably choose to continue with the study of the subject in Years 10 and 11.



# Durham School Curriculum Plan 2024/25

## Year 9 From September 2024

Year	Setting, Branding, Core and Options	Subject	2 Week Lesson Allocation [60]
9	<p><b>Core</b></p> <p><b>Mathematics, English, French, and Science [now taught as Biology, Chemistry, and Physics] are set across the whole year group</b></p> <p><b>Geography, History, PE and Contemporary Studies</b> are taught in the same block as English</p> <p>RS/LWE are taught in science sets.</p> <p>Options subjects are taught in mixed ability groups. Pupils select 4 from the following 7: Art, Classical Civilisation, Design, Drama, Computer Science, Latin, Music.</p> <p>Language Options are taught in mixed ability groups. Pupils opt for either Spanish or German.</p>	<p><b>Core</b></p> <p>Mathematics English French 2nd Modern Language [German or Spanish] Biology Chemistry Physics Geography History RPE LWE PE Games Contemporary Studies Assembly/Chapel</p> <p>Options: Option 1 Option 2 Option 3 Option 4</p>	<p>6 6 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 2 1 1 8 1 2</p> <p>3 3 3 3</p>

# Art

Head of Department: Mrs L E Thompson

## Introduction

Art is a broad and complex subject which aims to deliver a wide breadth of understanding of artistic medias, materials and processes. Art is everywhere and can be experienced by everyone. It helps build a knowledge of an ever-changing and growing world. It enables expression and promotes imagination.

## Year 7-9

Pupils are taught key skills during the early years focusing on the key formal elements of art. As pupils progress the department helps to further develop artistic expertise and aims to promote independent learning and self-expression, underpinned by a thorough technical training.

Pupils undertake a variety of project work based on given themes. The curriculum is designed to provide pupils with a vast variety of key artistic skills. The acquisition of competent drawing skills is encouraged and pupils undertake a variety of exercises to facilitate this. Above all, we aim to ensure that pupils enjoy the subject and are able to appreciate art in the wider world.



# Design Technology

Head of Department: Mrs L E Thompson

## Introduction

The Design Technology curriculum provides pupils with the opportunity to design and make products that develop their creativity and originality using a range of skills that range from Computer Aided Design and Technical Drawing, to practical skills in the workshop or classroom. The schemes of work seek to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills to enable them to problem solve creatively and work independently towards solutions.

## Year 7-9 Design Technology

Pupils undertake a variety of structured projects each year which develop key skills and confidence within areas such as Graphic Design, Workshop tasks, Product Design, Textiles and Design Communication.

Year 9 pupils follow a more focused pre-GCSE course where key knowledge and understanding are developed within the broad areas of Three-Dimensional Design and Graphic Communication, along with developing the core skills, knowledge and approaches that will aid them at GCSE and beyond. Our aim is always to enable all pupils to have the opportunity to succeed and understand the role of design in the wider world.



# Drama

Head of Department: Mrs A V Brownlee

## Introduction

Drama is an exciting and rewarding subject which offers pupils the opportunity to develop skills of confidence, discipline and creative teamwork. As well as performance skills, crafting of the theatre and technical and design elements are studied.

All year groups studying drama will work towards assessed performances that will often take place in front of an invited audience. Drama plays a huge role in life at Durham School, with many pupils actively taking part in the range of co-curricular opportunities on offer; for example the annual school production, live theatre visits or House drama competitions.

## Year 7-9

Lower School Drama teaches pupils key drama skills including use of gesture, voice, tableau and mime. Pupils learn how to evaluate their work using drama terminology and will explore different play scripts and be introduced to different styles of theatre like Greek Tragedy and *Commedia Dell'arte*. In Year 9 pupils explore all elements of the theatre and will be exposed to a range of different plays and texts; preparing script work for performance and crafting ambitious and extensive devised scenes in a range of different styles. Pupils also have the option to be assessed on technical or design skills like lighting, sound or costume. Pupils learn to successfully reflect on the rehearsal process and evaluate the success of their work as a performer or a designer.



# English

Head of Department: Mrs F Swan

## Introduction

Much of our English curriculum is delivered through the literature we study. Reading is central to teaching children how to write effectively so pupils study literature in class and are also encouraged to read widely for pleasure. Pupils experience writing in different forms be it journals, letters, essays, reviews or narratives. Each year group studies a novel, a Shakespearean play and a selection of poetry. Grammar is taught explicitly and assessed, and also reviewed through the pupil's own writing and the feedback given by their teacher. Reading comprehension is practised through the study of literature and also discretely through unseen passages and comprehension tasks. Pupils also experience a number of non-fiction texts. Through internal prizes and external competitions pupils take part in debating, public speaking, writing and reciting poetry, and creating stories and mini sagas.

As part of Reading Week, pupils in Year 7 visit Seven Stories, the archive of children's literature in Newcastle. We also take part in a scheme called Book Buzz whereby students can choose from the Book Buzz book list and pay a fraction of the retail price for the book of their choice. The Buzz created is the discussion of which books to read and recommendations from peers of which books to read next! The Library holds copies of all of the Book Buzz options.

## Year 7-9

Pupils have seven lessons of English a fortnight. In Year 7 pupils start looking at storytelling and narrative structures and move on to consider their class reader. Pupils will usually study 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and complete an introduction to Shakespeare task. Our aim in year 7 is to introduce pupils to Shakespearean texts in an accessible and engaging manner.

The poetry that pupils study is taken from a wide range of anthologies. In Year 8 pupils look at storytelling through ballads and poetic forms as well as considering their class reader. They will usually study either 'Macbeth' or a comedy for their Shakespeare text going into more detail than their Year 7 study of a Shakespeare play.

In years 7 to 9 we use an online vocabulary learning platform called Bedrock. We have found this to be extremely helpful in supporting the development of not only students' vocabulary but also the amount they read and engage with different texts. Each student completes an initial test on Bedrock that sets the block that they work through, so the work is appropriate for each student.

# Geography

Head of Department: Dr C H Scott-Warburton

## Introduction

Geography builds knowledge of the world we live in and an understanding of geographical processes and current events, from local to global scale.

## Year 7-9

In Years 7, 8 and 9 all pupils study Geography. The curriculum we follow hopes to inspire in pupils a curiosity about the world, and give them a desire to increase their knowledge and understanding of a variety of places. The topics of study are relevant to the main geographical issues and concepts that young adults are likely to encounter in their current and future lives.

Year 7 pupils learn how to make geographical observations to investigate the world about them. They develop their map skills, study settlements, investigate rivers and extreme weather events. Year 8 are encouraged to look more globally, studying ecosystems, economic inequality and adventure landscape formation. In Year 9 pupils become geographical decision makers through the study of global problems brought about by development issues, earth hazards, urbanisation and megacities.

# History

Head of Department: Mr S P Wright

## Introduction

The History Department has a head start with Durham School pupils. They are absorbing history throughout the school day, and the ghosts of ODs haunt the lessons. Are they studying the Anglo-Scottish Wars? King John Balliol attended school in Durham. Are they looking at Queen Elizabeth's persecution of the Catholics? Step forward James Young, alias James Dingle, OD. Are they researching slavery? Behold Granville Sharp, who helped secure the end of slave trading. Henry Hardinge OD fought with Wellington at Waterloo and became Commander-in-Chief of the British Army. Noel Hodgson OD is one of the war poets and fell on the first day of the Somme. History is truly all around them.

## Year 7-9

All pupils take History, in which they are introduced to a thousand years of British history.

In Year 7, our focus is on England in the Middle Ages. Topics include the Norman Conquest, kingship, warfare, the Church and the evolution of medieval society.

Year 8 pupils examine the revolutions that transformed early modern Britain. The Reformation saw England and Scotland break from Rome. The Civil War, Glorious Revolution and Act of Union created a new country. The Industrial Revolution made the UK the 'workshop of the world'.

We take a global perspective in Year 9. We begin with the British Empire, before studying in detail the causes and course of the two World Wars.



# Computer Science

**Head of Department:** Mrs L Fox

## Introduction

Consisting of two modern computer suites, each classroom has approximately 24 networked computers, allowing controlled safe access to the internet for all pupils. Access to this network is available during the lessons and activities, allowing for free study or class work to be completed. Site-wide wireless support allows pupils to access the internet through the safety of the school firewall on their own computer equipment, alongside equipment that is provided by the school.

## Year 7-9

Pupils follow a common scheme of work based upon the National Curriculum, developing their skills in support of all subjects studied in Years 7-9. Building strong computer skills at this early stage is seen as essential for a pupil's education at Durham School, giving a solid foundation for the use of technology throughout the pupil's life within the school, and beyond.

# Latin and Classical Civilisation (Year 9)

Head of Department: Mr C J Hope

## Introduction

Latin focuses on the language of the Roman world but also the historical and social context of the Roman world. Classical Civilisation offers pupils a chance to access the societies of the ancient world by introducing them to the gods, cities, leisure pursuits and literature of Greece and Rome.

The department has recently run trips to Rome and Pompeii and makes use of the proximity of Hadrian's Wall and local Roman sites. It also has close links with Durham University and the wider Classics community from which speakers are invited to conduct workshops or present talks to older pupils.

## Year 7-9

Latin is taught to all pupils in Year 7 and 8 using material from the Cambridge Latin Course. Basic grammatical concepts are introduced in reading passages set in Pompeii. Each chapter incorporates background material on Pompeii revealing how Roman society functioned. Progress continues in Year 8 with stories based in and historical background information concentrating on Britain and in Egypt under the Roman Empire.

Latin during Year 9 continues to build on the grammar of Years 7 and 8 with the introduction of more forms and vocabulary lists. The focus is on reading Latin and graduated passages, giving pupils a grasp of the foundations of the language by the end of the year. In Year 9 pupils can choose to come along to the Year 9 Ancient Greek Club, offered on a lunchtime after Christmas, where they learn the basics of the language for fun or with a view to pursuing the subject as an additional GCSE in Years 10 and 11.

Classical Civilisation in Year 9 involves an introduction to the beginning of Greek civilisation and its history, inventions and myths. The material studied in Year 9 links closely to that of the GCSE course so the course serves as a 'taster' for further study though integral in itself.

# Mathematics

**Head of Department:** Mr T N Middleton

## Introduction

Mathematics is a powerful tool for understanding the world around us and a fascinating discipline in its own right. We have an enthusiastic and highly-qualified staff who are here to engage and help through all of the courses. We are very proud of our results with excellent pass rates at both GCSE and A Level. Each of our classrooms is equipped with an interactive whiteboard and we have an exceptionally powerful online learning platform for all pupils.

## Year 7-9

In Year 7 and 8 we follow the Collins Maths Frameworking scheme, and begin the GCSE course in Year 9. Pupils are set according to ability. There is, however, opportunity for movement between sets depending on performance during the year.

# Modern Foreign Languages

Head of Department: Mrs K L Wilkinson

## Introduction

The teaching of languages at Durham School dates back at least to the school's re-foundation in 1541 by King Henry VII, and beyond to the monastic school begun with the building of the Cathedral. Building on our history of teaching languages at Durham School, we hope to combine the best elements of the grammar - translation tradition with modern methodology to enable pupils to use the language accurately and effectively in everyday situations as well as to prepare pupils for further study.

## Year 7-9

In Year 7, pupils receive five periods of French per fortnight and are taught in mixed ability groups, while in Year 8 pupils are set by ability across the whole year group. In Year 8, we divide six language lessons equally each fortnight between French and German or French and Spanish. At the end of Year 7, pupils are given the opportunity to opt for their second Modern Language (German or Spanish) in the Easter term.

French remains a core subject in Year 9 with pupils set across the whole year group. Each set has three periods of French per fortnight. Those pupils who have opted for German or Spanish in Year 8 will continue with this second Modern Language in Year 9. This should give pupils a good idea about which language, or indeed languages, to study for GCSE.



# Music

Head of Department: Mr S R Bowler

## Introduction

Music at Durham School plays a central role in the communal life of the school. The department aims to ensure that practical music making is made as inclusive as possible for all pupils throughout the school, whilst striving for the highest possible musical standards at all levels.

Academic music is given a high priority and the pupils are encouraged to study music at GCSE and A Level. The curriculum is challenging and structured, based on performing, listening and composing. The department provides tuition and coaching on all instruments and voice, and endeavours to motivate and enthuse all musicians within an environment which promotes and rewards high values. Links are maintained with feeder schools, the Cathedral and University as well as further afield and internationally. Above all, the department strives to promote a sense of pride, achievement and enjoyment in all its activity.

## Year 7-9

Classes are of mixed ability, but teaching is tailored to the specific ability of each student. There are suitable extension tasks for more advanced young musicians and support is there to ensure less experienced pupils fully understand each point of learning. We place great importance on singing and aural skills and most lessons begin with a 'Kodaly' based singing exercise. Confidence in this area significantly improves outcomes in subsequent theoretical and practical activities. Lessons make use of keyboards and djembes for performance activities and there are opportunities to experience music technology through composition tasks using 'Musescore'. All the skills encountered and developed in Years 7 - 9 prepare students for GCSE study should they wish to pursue this course.



# Religious Studies

Head of Department: Fr S A McMurtary

## Introduction

Religious Studies, Philosophy and Ethics is a lively subject that explores the key beliefs and practices of the six major world religions as well as an introduction to philosophy and ethics. The emphasis in Years 7–9 is on developing cultural literacy, as well as critical thinking skills and logical reasoning. Religion continues to impact the world in a myriad of ways, and it is as important today as it has ever been for young people to be thoroughly equipped to navigate the complexities of the religious landscape.

## Year 7–9

Over the course of Year 7 and Year 8 pupils will focus on Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. As each religion is explored, pupils will research key beliefs and practices as well as influential figures and their impact today. By the end of Year 8, all pupils will have a good overview of the six major world religions and be in a good position to explore these further at GCSE.

In further preparation for the GCSE course, Year 9 pupils will be introduced to the basic ideas of philosophy. This will include arguments for and against the existence of God and an exploration of ethical issues such as crime, punishment and abortion. By the end of Year 9, all pupils will have had the opportunity to develop their ability to critically examine completing claims and argue a thesis.

# Science

Head of Department: Mrs T L Moore

## Introduction

Science is an exciting subject which focuses the mind on discovering how the world fits together. It helps us think logically and helps develop a scientific approach to understanding and to learning. In both Year 7 and Year 8 we concentrate on developing the skills needed for GCSE using practical investigation work, group projects and basic mathematical reasoning. We also help pupils to understand the key fundamental topics such as the atom, cells and forces, leaving them well prepared for the start of GCSE science.

Pupils are taught all three subjects of Chemistry, Physics and Biology from the start but are taught how the three subjects often link together.

Science also provides a lot of extra-curricular opportunities during lunchtimes, including gardening club, and takes part in its own Science week. The department also enters national competitions throughout the years. Field trips are also part of the course and pupils will most definitely remain enthusiastic about the subject as they approach Year 9.

## Year 7-9

At Key Stage 3 we cover a two-year bespoke course which focuses on the skills and scientific reasoning required as a prerequisite for success at GCSE. The pupils follow a skills-based curriculum but incorporate a range of subjects throughout which includes Life Processes and Living Things, Materials and their Properties, Physical Processes and Scientific Enquiry. The emphasis is on the key topics pupils will need to understand when starting GCSE sciences in Year 9, but also gives them the skills required to be excellent scientists.

Practical work is also a key part of the course and the pupils are taught how to be safe and inquisitive from day one. The science that is taught is both challenging and enjoyable. Pupils are encouraged to communicate ideas, work independently and at the same time develop respect for others as well as the environment.

Year 9 covers the GCSE topics that are key to success as pupils approach the start of GCSE in Year 10. The work they do also focuses on scientific skills and gaining a more practical experience of science, with coverage of some of the Core Practicals that are assessed in Year 11.



## Get in touch:

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