

Westminster Tutors



Curriculum Policy
2023-2024

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Westminster Tutors was founded as a tutorial college, preparing female students for applications to Oxford and Cambridge universities. Although it has long been a co-educational sixth form college, it retains critical elements of its heritage, particularly retaining one-to-one tuition as the standard form of provision. In this aspect, as a mainstream sixth form college, it is unique.
- 1.2 Basing provision around one-to-one teaching presents both opportunities and challenges. As per the college ethos, it allows for a highly individualised, bespoke provision that meets individual needs in ways other schools cannot. For instance, highly flexible timetables are built around individual needs, including lesson and study times. Equally, academic and pastoral support is woven together holistically, and inclusion is a central tenet of the approach.
- 1.3 While the strength of this approach is reflected in the college's academic and pastoral success, one-to-one tuition presents its own challenges, especially in building a broad and balanced curriculum. Students could feel isolated and fail to develop interpersonal skills without the opportunities to work and socialise together. Likewise, students may lack an opportunity to discuss aspects of their courses with their peers or co-teach. Students could also lack access to the broader curriculum or extracurricular activities. This curriculum policy aims to set out how the college delivers its individualised, tailored academic and pastoral programme and ensures that the more comprehensive curriculum is covered and given equal priority. It is a central tenet of the Westminster Tutors approach that we aim to meet the needs of the whole individual within a whole school approach.
- 1.4 Therefore, while this curriculum policy is divided into sections that address the academic and the broader curriculum separately, the idea of an integrated approach is central to the college. This involves initially building an individual curriculum around the students' needs and then embedding their curriculum into the provision of the college.

2. Background Information about the College

- 2.2 Westminster Tutors was founded in 1934 by Ann Freeston as a tutorial college to support female students applying to Oxford and Cambridge. Although it is now a co-educational, independent sixth form college based in South Kensington, the central aims of the college extend back to its foundation: academic excellence and inclusive pastoral support.

- 2.2 Academic excellence is ensured by the high quality of teaching staff and a bespoke, individualised approach, with all tuition one-to-one, in small classes, or a combination of individual tuition and classes. Adapting to the needs of each student is of central importance, including individual curriculums and flexible timetables. A personal tutor supports Every student closely, and study skills and pastoral mentors provide additional support. The college prides itself on the progress made by all students, particularly those with neurological differences, learning difficulties or mental or physical health issues.
- 2.3 Besides the high-quality academic and pastoral provision, the college offers a broad and balanced curriculum, including expert UCAS and careers guidance, a full PSHCE programme, weekly sports sessions, study groups, clubs, activities, trips, and outings.

3. Ethos of the College

- 3.1 The ethos of the college is reflected in our core aims:
- To pursue academic excellence, provided through a bespoke and individualised curriculum that ensures every student achieves their potential.
 - To provide high-quality pastoral support, especially for those with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities, adapting to students' individual needs and celebrating diversity and difference.
 - To foster a mature, friendly, and inclusive atmosphere, making the college a safe and enjoyable place to study and work.
 - To work closely with all stakeholders, especially parents, to ensure that provision is holistic while centralising student voice and decision-making.
 - To support all students successfully transitioning to higher or further education or the workplace, providing expert university and career guidance.

4. Definition of a Curriculum

- 4.1 A curriculum is a framework for setting out the aims of an education programme. It is separated into three parts:
- **Intent:** planning for the knowledge and understanding to be gained at each stage
 - **Implementation:** translating that framework over time into a structure and narrative within an institutional context.
 - **Impact:** evaluating the knowledge and understanding students have gained against expectations.
- 4.2 The college constructs its curriculum as ambitious and designed to give all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or high needs, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. It aligns with the core standard of the quality of the curriculum as set out in the PFE

framework ([PFE Handbook - Inspection Framework for Educational Oversight 2021-04 01.pdf](#)).

- 4.3 Cultural Capital is ‘the knowledge and skills students need to take advantage of opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life’. It is ‘the essential knowledge that students need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.’

5. Purpose of Westminster Tutors Curriculum

- 5.1 The college adopts an individualised approach within a whole school context. This means that the curriculum's intent is broad and balanced and seeks to address academic and pastoral aims, intimately linked as they often are.
- 5.2 This holistic approach reflects a broader change in education, with a renewed focus on developing core values and competencies extending from the knowledge, skills and understanding of the academic syllabus. It is right that the college engages with the whole person, and this curriculum policy reflects the importance of the social-emotional development of our students, preparing them to thrive in an increasingly unpredictable and challenging world. Programmes such as *21st Century Competencies*¹ and the *IB Learner Profile*² detail some of those core values and competencies, such as:
- Self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and relationship management
 - Learners who are inquirers, thinkers, communicators, knowledgeable, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-taking, balanced, and reflective.
- 5.3 Therefore, the **intent** of the Westminster Tutors curriculum is reflected in the following aims:
- To encourage the growth of healthy, balanced, and well-adjusted students who enjoy education.
 - To support all students to learn effectively, developing their active learning and independent study skills.
 - To enable students to develop literacy and numeracy, including speaking and listening skills.
 - To enable students to develop logical, critical, and imaginative thinking skills to a high level across a full range of academic disciplines.
 - To progressively provide a level of choice in the curriculum that meets individuals’ needs, abilities and interests.

¹ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education-in-sg/21st-century-competencies>

² <https://www.ibo.org/benefits/learner-profile/>

- For all students to make good progress, whatever their aptitudes, aspirations, and abilities, including those with special educational needs and those with specific abilities, gifts or talents.
- To facilitate and support each student's development personally, socially, and culturally.
- To foster energetic and positive pastoral care and ensure that personal, social and health education helps students to develop resilience as they learn to exercise choice and to take personal responsibility in the adult world.
- To promote fundamental British values, such as democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, mutual respect, and tolerance amongst those of different faiths and beliefs.
- To encourage students to develop personal qualities of leadership, initiative, judgement, sensitivity, tolerance and understanding of the needs of others.
- To provide a framework that enables students to develop their physical and mental health and understand their central role in academic success.
- To further cultural and aesthetic understanding and appreciation through the visual arts, music, drama, and language, for example, by attending concerts, dramatic productions, and exhibitions.
- To provide appropriate and up-to-date career guidance and prepare all students for life's opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences as adults.

6. Key skills for 2023-2024

- 6.1 There could be seen to be something of a tension, or even a paradox, about the notion of a college that adapts in a highly bespoke and individual way to the needs of its students and that must necessarily, therefore, be flexible and adaptable in its approach, with one that also seeks a whole school approach to its curriculum.
- 6.2 While it may be true that the college's student body is diverse - a bespoke approach works for all students - all students have key aspects in common:
- All are taking or retaking A levels.
 - All are approaching the end of formal schooling and preparing for a transition to adulthood and independent life.
 - All have lived through the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - All have grown up in a highly digital world.
- 6.3 In addition, an increasing number of students, both in general and in the context of the college cohort, will have had physical or mental health issues or neurological or learning differences.

- 6.4 Therefore, in addition to the broad aims of the policy, the academic and pastoral teams have agreed that in 2023-2024 the college will focus on the following key skills that will be embedded within the curriculum for all students:
- **Social communication**, primarily through presentations, debates, and discussions.
 - **Active learning**, including independent study and research.
 - **Reading** includes books or long-form articles or listening to audiobooks or podcasts, individually or in clubs and groups.
 - **Well-being** includes mental health, positive relationships with others, developing hobbies, healthy eating and sleeping, and physical activity.
- 6.5 These fundamental skills will become central to the PSHCE, SMSC, RSHE and individual academic programmes of study.

7. The Taught Curriculum

- 8.1 Westminster Tutors admits UK students aged 16-25; thus, the college admits solely non-compulsory school-age (NCSA) students. Westminster Tutors offers prospective students the opportunity to re-sit GCSEs, initiate their A level students in Year 12, join our college in Year 13, or re-take A levels after sitting previous public exams. All our courses are taught in English; students are expected to have previously studied English and Mathematics at GCSE.
- 8.2 Alongside A levels, students can take an EPQ (Extended Project Qualification), especially if they intend to apply to competitive universities. In addition, students can combine lessons at Westminster Tutors with classes at our sister college, David Game College, which offers several additional subjects not taught here, such as Computer Science or Music.
- 8.3 Before students are enrolled on a course, their previous GCSE and/or A level results are scrutinised against our admissions criteria, please see the Admissions Policy, to ensure that all students are only offered appropriate courses for their age, aptitude, and capabilities.
- 8.4 Students' previous GCSE and/or A level results are used as a baseline to assess ability. Further, in the first half term of students starting a course, they are given a teacher set and assessed assessment to establish realistic yet ambitious target grades. The outcomes of all assessments are shared with students and parents as part of informed discussions about a student's potential. Assessment results are used to ensure that the curriculum offered is individualised to each student's needs.
- 8.5 Details of how the taught curriculum is translated into subject Schemes of Learning (SoL) and curriculum plans are stored on our internal file storage system. They are available on request to students and parents.

- 8.6 Taken together, the taught curriculum will ensure that by the time they have completed their time with us, all students can demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding to enable them to move onto the next stage of their education at the highest level.

9. The Broader Curriculum

Mentoring

- 9.1 From September 2023, all new students enrolled at the college will undertake mentoring and study skills sessions. The sessions are scheduled weekly or fortnightly depending on how many subjects a student is studying or if they have more complex needs.
- 9.2 Mentoring at the college offers personalised support, creating a dynamic relationship with knowledgeable mentors. Beyond traditional classroom instruction, this one-on-one guidance addresses specific academic needs, encourages critical thinking, and fosters a growth mindset.
- 9.3 Mentors serve as role models, advisors, and motivators, empowering students to unlock their full potential. Through regular sessions, mentors provide constructive feedback, helping students identify areas of improvement and develop effective study strategies, leading to improved academic performance and a deeper understanding of complex topics. Additionally, mentoring nurtures essential life skills, instilling self-discipline and self-assurance in pursuing academic excellence.
- 9.4 The Director of Studies (Pastoral) is responsible for constructing/updating annual mentoring programme schemes of learning and curriculum plans.

PSHCE

- 9.5 PSHCE (Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economics Education) is a central aspect of the college's broader curriculum and how we aim to meet our whole college targets of promoting social communication and developing active and independent learners.
- 9.6 The syllabus is put together in part based on the college's chosen focus areas and in response to student and parent priorities, as shown through the annual PSHCE survey completed before the start of the Autumn Term. The survey is based on the PSHCE Association Key Stage Five summary. It includes a range of potential topics, including those related to FBV (Fundamental British Values), SMSC (Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural development), RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education) and living in the wider world. In addition, there is also a focus on study skills and UCAS and career development.

- 9.7 The PSHCE programme is also intentionally flexible and relies on students' feedback throughout the year about areas they wish to focus on. PSHCE sessions can also be adapted to specific issues in the news or events in the college. The aim for 2023-2024 is also that PSHCEs should focus on student communication and act as a discussion forum. This reflects the priorities of students in 2022-2023, who said they preferred more discussion-based sessions.
- 9.8 There are three allocated times for PSHCE every week: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1-2 p.m. All year 12 and 13 students are expected to attend one weekly session. Some SEND students may be provided with PSHCE one-to-one or in small, bespoke groups, as outlined in individual Independent Education Plans.

RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education)

- 9.9 RSHE is a fundamental part of the PSHCE curriculum. The college has appointed an RSHE lead, Victoria Moore, who leads the programme. All year 12 and 13 students receive two RSHE sessions a term. The sessions themselves will focus on topics such as consent, sexual harassment, and online safety.

Sports & Exercise

- 9.10 The intent of the Westminster Tutors' sports and exercise programme is for students to understand and appreciate the importance of physical and mental health. Students must also participate in regular exercise, focussed but not limited to the weekly gym sessions.
- 9.11 The college arranges weekly gym sessions for year 12 and 13 students. PSHCE sessions are also used to focus on the importance of physical health and initially to set up students to record their weekly activities on individual sports record sheets. Students are supported to aim for individual targets, including gym sessions and independent exercise.
- 9.12 Besides the weekly gym sessions, the college arranges for termly staff versus student matches. These are based on a rotation of indoor football (term one), netball (term two) and rounders (term three).

SMSC & FBV

- 9.13 FBV (Fundamental British Values) and SMSC (Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural development) are embedded throughout the Westminster Tutors curriculum, both academic and pastoral. Teachers are guided to include FBV in their curriculum design. Through lesson observations and staff forums, staff are supported to be imaginative in tailoring these aspects to their subjects.

- 9.14 The intent for both FBV and SMSC is as per the curriculum aims in section four and as per the college approach towards inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for difference. We aim to encourage critical thinkers who understand their roles within society as informed and educated citizens.
- 9.15 Implementation is also through the PSHCE programme, particularly the debating competition, which runs yearly in the Spring Term. Topics that challenge students to reflect on broader cultural and social issues are intentionally chosen. External speakers also contribute to the programme.

Careers Education

- 9.16 The college's Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIEAG) Policy sets out the college's approach in detail, including its intent, implementation, and impact. The college prides itself on the support we offer our students as they transition on to careers and higher or further education. Guidance is bespoke and individualised, with each student supported by the college's highly experienced Director of Studies responsible for UCAS and Careers, Virginia Maguire.

Extracurricular activities

- 9.17 Westminster Tutors values the impacts of students exploring and developing through engagement with extracurricular activities, such as clubs, trips and outings, and activities with other schools. The events and activities on offer vary yearly depending on what is occurring in the local community and students' interests.

10. Individualised Curriculums - The College Approach

- 10.1 Westminster Tutors is, in many ways, a unique college, focussing as it does on one-to-one and very small class provision. This bespoke, individualised approach is extended to every aspect of the college's approach. It is at its most apparent regarding the use of individualised programmes of study for each subject and student.
- 10.2 Every student has a team of teachers, including a personal tutor, subject teachers, and, for most, study skills and pastoral mentor. All the teachers share single student records, on which individualised curriculum plans are shared between the teachers. These curriculum plans cover individual progress monitoring to ensure that an extremely high level of attention is given to each student's needs based on their strengths and weaknesses.

By sharing this information, teachers can focus on what works for each student and communicate about any issues. The personal tutor and the senior leaders oversee the process, including every half term, to monitor progress as recorded on the records.

- 10.3 Linked to the individualised curriculums are bespoke timetables built around each student. These include academic curricular and extra-curricular activities, such as PSHCE, weekly gym sessions, and study groups. Adaptions will be made for each student, particularly those with SEND, mental health issues, or learning differences.
- 10.4 The college's curriculum is profoundly inclusive and adapted to the whole student, setting their needs centrally. Students are encouraged to develop their voices at every stage of their educational journey with us, including in timetable planning. This may mean adjusting the length of classes or changing lesson times. Not every request can be met, but timetables and programmes are often modified throughout the year to meet individual needs. Likewise, in academic curriculum planning, students are encouraged to be active learners and take responsibility in a scaffolded manner with their studies, i.e., with likely increased support at the beginning of the course, with increasing independence and self-study built in. By the end of their time at Westminster Tutors, we hope to have supported students with the self-awareness and maturity to know when and how best to work, learn, and balance their studies and extracurricular activities. This includes understanding the role of physical and mental health in academic performance and the value of resilience to long-term success.

11. Key Information

The Academic Year & Contact Hours

- 11.1 Westminster Tutors has a 32-week academic year. The college is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; lessons occur throughout that period. All activities, except for trips, outings, and field trips, occur on-site during those hours.
- 11.2 Contact teaching time per student varies according to how many students are in a class. The following hours are standard per subject:
- 3 hours per subject for one-to-one tuition.
 - 4 hours per subject for classes of two.
 - 5 hours per subject for classes of three or more.
- 11.3 Students taking three A levels typically receive 9-15 hours of tuition per week.
- 11.4 Lessons are typically 1.5 hours each. Therefore, a student studying one-to-one will have two weekly lessons per subject.

- 11.5 For full-time students, i.e., those for whom Westminster Tutors is the sole place of study and who are taking three or more A levels with us, the college aim is for all students to be on-site full-time, five days a week, 25 hours.
- 11.6 Exceptions to the above guidelines are made for students with SEND, especially those covered by EHCPs, and older students, e.g., retaking.
- 11.7 In addition to the contact hours of teaching, year 12 and 13 students have mandatory PSHCE and weekly gym sessions, study sessions, and study groups added to their timetables. Mentoring sessions and meetings with personal tutors are also added to timetables, as are optional clubs.
- 11.8 While the college policy is for all year 12 and 13 students to attend the college full time on site, the fundamental ethos of inclusively adapting to the student takes precedence, and students with, e.g., mental health issues and historically poor attendance are encouraged to build their in-person attendance over time through, e.g., online lessons.

Remote Learning

- 11.9 Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the college is adept at offering remote learning, a format that works exceptionally well with one-to-one teaching. The college policy is that all tuition should be on-site, and the college aims to provide a holistic and broad curriculum through in-person student engagement. However, remote lessons are a helpful tool and may be requested under certain circumstances:
- For students with mental health issues, in-person attendance is a challenge. This especially applies to students with diagnosed conditions and those on EHCPs.
 - If a student or teacher is unwell and unable to attend on-site but is well enough to attend in person.
 - If a student or teacher cannot come to college for any reason, such as transport issues, or if they are attending an open day or other events for part of a school day.
- 11.10 The college's approach is, therefore, flexible, albeit with the core focus on ensuring that students attend in person.

Exam Boards

- 11.12 The college can prepare students for other qualifications, but our curriculum centres on A levels. The college is also an exam centre for the OCR, AQA, WJEC and Edexcel exam boards, mainly for our students and a small number of external candidates.

Progress Monitoring

11.13 Progress is monitored constantly at Westminster Tutors, and the approach outlined above is intended to ensure that records of progress are kept and shared to the degree that teachers and school leaders are always aware of student progress. Nevertheless, there are specific benchmarked data points:

- Enrolment - all data from external and internal sources, i.e., GCSE and A Level results, predicted grades from previous schools, and information in reports.
- Autumn Half Term
 - **New students:** individual subject baseline assessments and target-setting reports.
 - **Existing students:** internal progress monitoring via the shared student records.
- Autumn Term Mock Exams
 - Year 12 students should complete at least one formal mock.
 - Year 13 students should complete one formal mock per subject.
- Spring Half Term - internal progress monitoring via the shared student records
- Spring Term Mock Exams
 - Year 12 students should complete at least one formal mock.
 - Year 13 students should complete one formal mock per subject.
 - Year 12 End-of-Year Exams - one formal end-of-year exam per subject.
- Summer Term Reports are 'old fashioned' reports sent to parents, containing a summary of work done, strengths and weaknesses, and end-of-term assessment results and an outline of the next steps and summer holiday work.

11.14 As per the college approach, there may be amendments to the above process, for instance, if a student has mental health issues and cannot complete a formal mock or is in year 12 and requests a higher number of formal mocks. In addition, timed and invigilated homework can be completed at any time throughout the year, depending on need. Many students need additional support working under exam conditions.

12. Students with SEND

12.1 Our curriculum is inclusive. For those students with special educational needs or specific learning difficulties, the college has a well-established Director of Studies (Pastoral) who oversees curriculum adaptations to SEND students' needs.