

Westminster Tutors



Curriculum Policy
2024-2025

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Statement of Educational Purpose

Westminster Tutors is committed to delivering a highly individualised, holistic education supporting academic and personal development. Our curriculum is designed to provide a balanced and comprehensive education that prepares students for higher education and beyond. The key aspects of our curriculum focus on academic courses, careers and UCAS guidance, mentoring, and Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship, and Economic (PSHCE) education.

Academic Courses

At the heart of our curriculum is a commitment to academic excellence. All students receive one-to-one tuition, enabling personalised learning that caters to individual strengths, needs, and aspirations. This approach ensures that students develop their intellectual skills across various academic subjects, emphasising critical thinking, problem-solving, and independent study skills. Alongside A-levels, students have the opportunity to undertake the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which is particularly beneficial for those aiming for competitive university applications.

Careers and UCAS Guidance

Westminster Tutors recognises the importance of preparing students for life beyond school; expert guidance is a key feature of our provision. Our experienced staff offers personalised UCAS support, ensuring students are well-prepared for university applications. We provide bespoke career advice, helping students explore potential career paths and make informed decisions about their futures. This process is embedded within the curriculum and focuses on study skills, personal development, and practical career planning.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a cornerstone of the Westminster Tutors approach. Every student is assigned a personal mentor who provides regular, tailored support to enhance academic progress and individual well-being. Mentoring sessions help students develop effective study strategies, improve their time management, and address any academic challenges they may face. The mentoring programme also fosters emotional resilience and personal growth, ensuring students are equipped to handle the pressures of academic life and beyond.

PSHCE

The PSHCE programme at Westminster Tutors plays a vital role in nurturing students' social and emotional development. It provides a platform for students to discuss important topics such as mental health, relationships, citizenship, and economic awareness. The programme is flexible, responding to student feedback and current issues, and designed to encourage active participation and communication skills. PSHCE also addresses key aspects of social communication, well-being, and study skills, ensuring that students develop holistically and are well-prepared for adulthood.

Westminster Tutors provides a unique and supportive learning environment that places the individual at the centre of their educational experience. Through academic excellence, personal mentoring, and a comprehensive PSHCE programme, we ensure that students are prepared for their next steps in education and equipped with the life skills and personal confidence they need to succeed.

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 mentor supports every student closely, focusing on study skills and pastoral matters. Each student also has a senior tutor, who oversees their academic progress and is the main point of contact between student, teachers and parents. 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, and a regular program of clubs, activities, trips, and outings. There is a weekly compulsory session called “Student Discussion”, during which students debate topics on the SMSC and RSHE curriculum. This is also an opportunity to receive UCAS and careers guidance and receive talks from visiting speakers.

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 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](#)).
- 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.

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

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

- 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.
- 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 2024-2025

- 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 2024-2025 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 SMSC, RSHE and individual academic programmes of study.

7. The Taught Curriculum

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 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.

- 7.5 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.
- 7.6 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.

8. The Broader Curriculum

Mentoring

- 8.1 From September 2023, all new students enrolled at the college 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.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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 for improvement and develop effective study strategies. This leads 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.
- 8.4 The Pastoral Coordinator is responsible for constructing/updating the mentoring policy and programme.

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. It also offers students a social aspect amongst one another; thus, it also contributes to the social programme at the college.
- 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 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. For 2024-2025, PSHCEs aim to focus on student communication and act as a discussion forum. This reflects the priorities of students in 2023-2024, who said they preferred more discussion-based sessions.
- 9.8 There is one allocated time for PSHCE every week: Wednesday from 1-2 p.m. All students are expected to attend sessions aimed at their year group, where possible. 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. 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 While no explicit sports or exercise curriculum exists, healthy diet and exercise are incorporated into college mentoring and PSHCE sessions to promote students' well-being.

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. 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 and the college's approach to 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. 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 Senior Consultant/Director of Studies responsible for UCAS and Careers, Virginia Maguire.

Social activities

9.17 Westminster Tutors values the impacts of students exploring and developing through engagement with social activities, such as clubs, trips and outings, and activities with other colleges. 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, 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 yearly 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 mentoring sessions added to their timetables.

When it benefits students to have teachers and their mentors help them structure their study time, study sessions are also added to their timetables.

- 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 online.
- 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 but also for 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

- Students complete a baseline assessment, which informs a progress report indicating whether they are on track for target grade. This assessment might be a piece of timed work, classwork, homework, or a combination of these. (Teachers make a judgement on which sort of assessment is best for evaluating strengths and areas for improvement.) This assessment is in week 3 for Year 13. For Year 12, it is at the end of the first half term.
- Autumn Term Mock Exams
 - All students sit at least one mock in each subject.
 - For Year 13, these mocks will usually reproduce the style and structure of final exams.
 - For Year 12, mocks will resemble final exams as far as possible, given what they have studied so far.
- Spring Half Term
 - As in the autumn half term, all students complete assessments which inform a progress report. These are completed at the end of the spring half term.
- Spring Term Mock Exams
 - As in the autumn term, all students sit at least one mock in each subject.
- Summer Term Mock Exams
 - In the summer term, Year 12 students sit at least one mock in each subject, as in the autumn and spring terms.

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 mock or is in year 13 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 Principal works with the Pastoral Coordinator to oversee curriculum adaptations to meet SEND students' needs.

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