

## **Curriculum Statement**

### **Intent**

Cowley International College is committed to providing a curriculum that is broad, balanced and challenging, fostering a love of learning to prepare our students for a life in an international world. We endeavour to ensure that our curriculum offer is the same for all students, regardless of their set, pathway, special educational needs or disabilities, social disadvantage or academic ability. We make every effort to cater for the students' individual abilities, interests and aspirations, giving every child the opportunity to strive for personal excellence. We are an academic school that aims to open doors for every student, whilst understanding the positive effect and contribution that creative, practical and vocational learning brings to a student's development.

We also recognise the importance of building the cultural capital of all of our students and have designed the curriculum in order to do so. Our hope is that every child who leaves Cowley International College has the qualifications, skills, knowledge and character to access aspirational Post-16 opportunities and to lead a life that includes positive relationships, resilience and financial independence. One way in which the college attempts to increase the cultural capital of all students is through our Cowleian Values Programme. Our mission is to create well-educated, independent, considerate, healthy and aspirational people that communicate well. Through teaching and providing an environment that is stimulating, safe and caring, we encourage all students to develop themselves and to support each other to achieve their full potential.

Sitting alongside our curriculum intent is the college's extracurricular programme. Staff offer an outstanding extracurricular activity programme for the benefit of all students.

### **Implementation**

In line with the National Curriculum, the college requires students to engage with a broad range of subjects in Key Stage 3 (KS3), followed by a Key Stage 4 (KS4) curriculum which includes a core programme and an extensive options programme. The 3-year KS3 guarantees both breadth and depth in the early years of the students' time at Cowley: all National Curriculum subjects are studied in Years 7, 8 and 9. Students continue to follow the National Curriculum in Key Stage 4 (KS4), taking core subjects such as English and Mathematics whilst starting to specialise as they take their GCSE/Btec options.

#### **Key Stage 3 – a broad, balanced curriculum**

The KS3 curriculum at Cowley International College follows the National Curriculum. In Years 7, 8 and 9 students follow programmes of study in English, Maths, Science, History, Geography, MFL, RE, PSE, Computing, Technology, Art, Music, PE and Games. Our curriculum ensures that Cowley meets the statutory requirements for all students and does so with sufficient depth and breadth.

In KS3, each subject area maps their curriculum against the National Curriculum. We fundamentally believe that it is important to teach students a broad range of topics and ideas. These topics help to broaden the minds and experiences of students and increases the cultural capital of our students. To ensure that this is for all our students, and not just some of them, we believe that the delivery of cultural capital must come from within the curriculum and not as an add-on to it. In this way, a well thought out curriculum really can improve the future job prospects and life chances all our students.



Beyond the classroom, we aim to open the door to a wide range of experiences. All subjects provide additional learning contexts including school productions, high-performing sports teams including rugby, hockey, football and cricket. There are numerous Saturday fixtures, choirs, major musical productions, international and UK based trips, and links with our partner schools which make a real difference in ensuring the continual enhancement of our students' cultural capital. Additionally, in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks, we work hard to ensure that all students have regular and meaningful experiences of the work-place, with our Careers programme starting as early as Year 7.

### **Key Stage 4 – a core programme, alongside a KS4 options programme**

The KS4 options process meets the statutory National Curriculum requirements and aims to provide a bespoke curriculum for the students at Cowley. For us, this means giving our students as much choice and flexibility as possible, whilst ensuring they follow examination courses that lead to positive outcomes and give them access to Post-16 opportunities at the correct level. Students are allocated to 2 Pathways according to their ability and aspirations and are asked to choose up to four options subjects. Both pathways prioritise the English Baccalaureate subjects, which we believe open the doorway to many opportunities in employment and Higher Education, whilst allowing students to follow a curriculum that can include vocational subjects which they believe best facilitate their likely next move into college or the world of work. The college recognises the importance of increasing the proportion of students who receive the EBACC. Currently around 50% of students at Cowley do so, but the college has set a target to increase this statistic until we reach the DfE target of 80%.

As part of our stated aim to ensure that all students receive an equivalent curriculum offer regardless of their pathway, the options programme at Cowley is designed to maximise the number of options available to all students when selecting their KS4 courses. Students are all expected to follow a KS4 core curriculum that includes Mathematics, English, Science, History or Geography, RE, PSE, IT and PE. Additionally, approximately half of the students at Cowley are expected to take an MFL subject to improve their future access to Russell Group universities. Students are offered a range of other subjects, including vocational qualifications in all options pathways. We allow the same amount of curriculum time to vocational qualifications as GCSE courses to ensure students have sufficient opportunity to experience relevant work-based projects alongside the assessed content. All students at Cowley are able to take non-core KS4 options courses, but none are obliged to do so.

Computing (or IT) is included in our KS4 core curriculum. Computing is of course a compulsory component of the National Curriculum at KS4, but many schools choose to deliver computing as a cross-curricula add-on to the curriculum. Local Market Information (LMI) from both Liverpool and Manchester has highlighted the increased employability of students with good IT skills and with this evidence of local need, we have decided to include Computing as part of our KS4 core curriculum in its own right. In doing so, we have followed advice from Computing at School, an organisation funded by the DfE. In their publication, "Computing in the National Curriculum: a guide for secondary teachers", they outlined the three distinct strands within computing, each of which is complementary to the others: computer science, information technology and digital literacy. It stated that at KS3 all three strands should be taught, but that in KS4 students should have the opportunity to study computing at KS4 and that 'ideally, pupils should have the opportunity to specialise in an area of computing such as taking a qualification in information technology, computer science or digital media'. With this in mind, all students are expected to take a KS4 course in either information technology or digital literacy, and in a similar way to science, where

students can choose to take either combined science or separate sciences at GCSE, we also allow students to choose to take GCSE Computer Science as part of the options programme. We are aware that even after following the course, some students may prefer not to take a formal qualification in IT at KS4, and for this reason, all students will be able to opt-out of the final qualification if they wish to do so.

In Year 11, students benefit from the addition of an extracurricular student support session programme. This provides a vital opportunity for intervention in the subjects where they require more support. The Gatsby Benchmarks are used to guide continuing work-related learning opportunities throughout Years 9 to 11, with a UCAS careers and employers' fair, one-to-one careers interviews with independent careers' advisors, enterprise events and regular contact with employers for every student.

At Cowley we are conscious of the importance of stretching our most able students. More able learners are those who will typically excel in relation to expectations for their age group. At Cowley we identify the more able students both pastorally and in departmental areas. The cohort is reviewed and updated regularly especially at key transition and assessment points. We have initiated a programme for these students known in the college as the "climb to 9" programme. It is specifically designed to enrich, extend and support the educational experience and outcomes of our most able learners, ensuring they make outstanding progress.

Our excellent extracurricular programme continues into Years 10 and 11, offering our students a range of sporting, theatrical, musical and cultural opportunities to ensure real breadth in the students' curriculum. The Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award begins in Year 10 and is successfully awarded to many of our students.

### **Impact**

- Progress 8 statistics for the college have increased significantly in recent years for all students, both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged (for instance, Maths, Ebacc and overall Progress 8 measures went up a quintile in 2019)
- The college is a successful member of the Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP), with Hurdle Test scores above national averages and Cowley now acting as a Hub school to help support other institutions in the North West. Mandarin is an increasingly important subject which will improve the life chances of those who take it.
- Almost all students continue to be offered 100% of their first-choices in the options process.
- Our 3 year KS3 curriculum guarantees a broad and balanced curriculum for all our students in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- All students receive the same curriculum offer, regardless of pathway, ability or their social background.
- The Cowley curriculum has not narrowed in recent years and continues to offer a broad mix of subjects and skills. Our students continue to routinely take 10 subjects at GCSE and Btec in Year 11, regardless of set or pathway.
- Destination measures (e.g. the September Guarantee) continue to provide strong evidence that Cowley students get good, independent careers advice as they move on to college, university, apprenticeships and employment.
- Cowley's NEET statistics are very low and are better than National and local averages (for instance in 2018 Cowley Y11 NEET = 1.5%, St Helens Y11 NEET = 3.5%).
- Following the introduction of Mandarin, KS4 students are now opting to take MFL subjects in increasing numbers (in 2020 there are 127 MFL GCSEs being taken in Year 10, whereas in 2019 the equivalent figure was 98).

- The college's Careers and Work Related Programme was commended and recognised in 2018 when we received the Quality in Career Standard Award, a key indicator in the college's success in delivering the Gatsby benchmarks.
- The college offers an exceptional package of extracurricular sporting activities.
- Student and parent voice comments/evidence have been very supportive (for instance in the recent Y7 student voice, 98.1% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were learning new topics in lessons).
- Awards showing external assurance for the quality of curriculum provision: such as the PSHE and RE Gold marks. The college is presently in the renewal stage of its International College Award, in line with its aim to enhance the cultural capital of its students.
- Inclusive and bespoke enrichment opportunities for the college's most-able students.
- An extensive Performing Arts extracurricular programme, with significant uptake across the school.
- Creative students at Cowley are given opportunities to express themselves in a wide range of disciplines, from acting, drama and music to full scale theatrical performances.
- Numerous world and European travel experiences for students.

## **Years 12 and 13 – Cowley Sixth Form College**

### **Intent**

Cowley Sixth Form College is an inclusive 16 -18, predominately level 3, provider. The college provides students with an ambitious, creative and wide ranging curriculum offer which enables students from our 11 – 16 site and external students, from the St. Helens area and beyond, to join at 16 and successfully prepare for the next step in their academic learning journey with progression to university, higher level apprenticeships or paid employment.

The curriculum has been designed with the intention to satisfy a wide range of ability levels. This ranges from students who wish to progress onto the prestigious universities e.g. Oxbridge/Russell group through to students who require a three year level 3 course by completing our unique foundation year programme which encompasses GCSE resits in Mathematics and English Language, a Level 3 BTEC qualification and relevant work experience.

In order to meet local need we also offer our popular Nursing Cadetship (Level 3) and Construction (Level 2) pathways which aim to deliver an integrated academic and work related learning programme to develop our students' academic and employability skills ready to enter the world of work.

As a sixth form college we recognise the importance of supporting our students to become independent, life-long learners. To this end we pride ourselves on the individualised support on offer for all students through small class sizes, a dedicated personal tutor and access to our supervised study are with full time learning mentor.

As an inclusive sixth form college we work closely with our 11-16 site and High Schools to ensure the smooth transition of all students and in addition arrange additional 1 -1 meetings with any DA or SEND students who need a more structured transition to post 16 study.

### **Implementation**

The design of our sixth form provision is in keeping with our stated desire to maximise our students' ability to progress to further study at a respected university or to secure a well-paid position in the world of work. As such, our Level 3 option blocks in Year 12 and 13 allow students to choose from a range of A Level, BTEC or similar vocational Level 3 qualifications or a mixture of the two to form a blended programme. A large proportion of our students decide to follow this mix and match approach in their studies. Students are given appropriate Careers Information and Guidance (CIAG) during both the application and enrolment process to ensure subject choices match their aspirational progression pathways.

In addition, to meet local need, we have bespoke courses that require students spending 3 days per week in college on their studies and 2 days per week on a work placement. This includes both our prestigious Level 3 Nurse Cadet programme (in partnership with St Helens and Knowsley Hospitals Trust) and our innovative one-year Level 2 construction course (with the support of many local building companies). Some students are also required to retake English and/or Mathematics GCSEs as part of their studies. Specialist subject teachers always teach these important GCSE courses.

Our inclusive nature ensures that we have also have appropriate programmes in place to ensure students are able to continue in their studies despite underperformance at GCSE. To this end we have our 3 year Foundation pathway that provides students, who have been unsuccessful in securing Mathematics and English Language, at least at grade 4, the opportunity to pursue a one year bridging course to support their transition from Level 2 to Level 3 studies undertaking appropriate resits, whilst maintaining academic rigour from embarking on one Level 3 course before progressing, in year 2, to a full time Level 3 programme.

Every student joining Cowley Sixth Form College is allocated a tutor. The pastoral support ensures that every individual is able to seek the help they need through a programme of regular one-to-one meetings in addition to larger group sessions addressing key aspects of personal development e.g. mental health awareness and with a strong focus on progression planning for life after leaving the sixth form.

Unique to our sixth form we have our Cowley Honours Programme and Cowley Scholars Programme. Both provide financial and academic support to our high achievers and provide students with personalised coaches, academic reading lists and a programme of workshops and visits.

The college also encourages all sixth form students to supplement their studies with enrichment activities, similar in its intent to our extracurricular programme for students in Years 7-11. Recent KS5 students have taken part in activities such as college rugby, football, cricket, first aid, a range of high quality concerts and theatre productions, the Duke of Edinburgh award, volunteering and Mandarin Chinese.

In order to develop our student's awareness and responsibility to the community, further enrichment opportunities are on offer as we arrange a number of fundraising and charitable events across the academic year. We also offer all students the opportunity, in Y13, to complete the Extended Project Qualification to enrich their academic studies further.

Work-related learning continues in the sixth form, most notably as part of our progression week at the end of Year 12. This includes amongst other activities a UCAS fair, an Apprenticeships and Employability fair, a one-one interview for every student (with external professionals from a range of backgrounds) and a work experience placement. Year 13 students also have one-to-one career interviews with independent careers' advisors.

### **Impact**

- Cowley is a larger than average inclusive Sixth Form which means we are able offer a wide portfolio of courses to our students.
- There are over 30 courses currently on offer in the sixth form ranging from traditional A Levels to vocational qualifications and career-based courses.
- The curriculum is constantly reviewed and new courses are introduced e.g. Sports Coaching and Development and Creative Digital Media (Sept 2020) to meet student interest and demand.
- 64% students of the 2019/2020 Y13 cohort applied to university, compared to previous historical data of around 55%.
- We have built strong links in the borough of St Helens and beyond with approximately 30% of our intake coming from external providers.
- The introduction of long-term work placements into some sixth form subjects (for instance the Level 3 Nurse Cadetship and the Level 2 Construction course) provides improving employability for these students.

- Our foundation year programme provides an excellent transition year for students who would typically miss out on the opportunity to progress onto Level 3 studies.
- The introduction of functional skills qualification in both Mathematics and English Language allows us to prepare students over a 12 month period to resit GCSE qualifications in both key subjects.
- Despite the many challenges attendance has improved year on year and now with 92% in Y13
- Our high standards and expectations ensure that every individual develops the ability to become independent and responsible life-long learners, fully equipped with the skill set to progress in their chosen field.
- Conducting Y12 – Y13 transition interviews for specific target students ensures that students are well prepared for Y13 and both progression rates and retention in the final year are excellent
- Punctuality to college is excellent and systems are in place to challenge lateness if required
- Attainment in the Sixth Form is good. A Level ALPS consistently black and BTEC ALPS consistently red with DFE headline measures for 2019 at C- and Merit respectively.
- Disadvantaged groups thrive on the supportive and inclusive ethos, performing well and achieving positive VA scores (2019 data)
- Our Supervised Study provision, and compulsory weekly supervised study session, ensures all students have access to a qualified member of staff to help with the transition
- Our unique Cowley Honours Programme and Cowley Scholars Programme challenges our most-able students and ensures foundations are established early in Y12 for progression to the most competitive universities
- Parental voice is extremely positive with over 97% confirming their son/daughter is happy in the Sixth Form and over 98% who feel there are a good range of courses on offer and that the college has high expectations of all students.