



Curriculum Policy

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Mission Statement

‘To educate young people to meet the challenges of life courageously, to use their talents to the full and to live the values of Christ’s Gospel’

1 Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how Thornton College designs, delivers and reviews its curriculum so that every student can learn, make progress and prepare for the next stage of education and adult life. It applies throughout the school, including Early Years, Pre-Prep, Prep, Senior School and Sixth Form, and today and boarding students, including students over the age of 18.

The policy describes the breadth and progression of the curriculum, access to learning and the principles governing individual curriculum adaptations. Detailed procedures for teaching, assessment, SEND support, attendance and safeguarding are set out in the related policies listed at the end.

2 Mission and curriculum aims

Our mission is “To educate young people to meet the challenges of life courageously, to use their talents to the full and to live the values of Christ’s Gospel”.

The curriculum gives practical expression to this mission through a broad and balanced education, appropriate challenge and opportunities for students to develop their interests and talents. Religious education, spiritual development and the values of Christ’s Gospel are integral to the school’s educational provision.

The curriculum aims to enable students to:

Acquire secure knowledge, deepen understanding and develop skills across a wide range of subjects.

Develop confidence in speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy.

Think critically and creatively, question thoughtfully and express reasoned views.

Enjoy learning and develop increasing independence, motivation and responsibility.

Develop resilience, self-discipline and the ability to work constructively with others.

Understand the interdependence of people, communities, nations and the environment.

Respect others and develop informed attitudes, values and beliefs.

Make informed educational and career choices and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

3 Curriculum design and progression

Thornton College provides full-time supervised education for students of compulsory school age. Curriculum planning takes account of students’ ages, aptitudes and needs, including special educational needs and disabilities and the provision specified in any Education, Health and Care plan.

Across the school, students experience linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education. Subject plans and schemes of work show how knowledge and skills develop over time, how learning builds on prior attainment and how students are prepared for subsequent study.

The National Curriculum informs planning where appropriate. As an independent school, Thornton College shapes its provision to reflect its mission and students' needs while meeting the applicable Independent School Standards, Early Years requirements and qualification specifications.

Curriculum breadth includes religious education, PSHE, physical education, careers education and co-curricular opportunities. Connections between subjects help students apply their learning, while subject teaching preserves the knowledge and methods particular to each discipline.

Transitions between phases are supported by communication between staff, consideration of prior learning and guidance for students and families. Option guidance helps students select coherent programmes suited to their interests, strengths and future plans.

4 Curriculum provision by phase

Early Years and Pre Prep

Early Years provision follows the applicable Early Years Foundation Stage framework. Learning supports communication and language, physical development, personal, social and emotional development, literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design. Planned activities and purposeful play take account of each child's development and interests.

Pre-Prep develops the foundations for later learning through literacy, numeracy and a broad range of creative, scientific, physical and social experiences. Teaching supports confidence, curiosity and participation, with appropriate provision for children who need additional support or challenge.

Prep School

The Prep curriculum uses the National Curriculum as a basis and develops subject knowledge alongside independent learning. Provision includes a mastery approach in mathematics, a Creative Curriculum linking arts and humanities through topic teaching in Years 1 to 4, programming in Computer Science and Forest School activities.

Subject specialists contribute particularly in the upper Prep. The ISEB Project Qualification is included in the upper Prep enrichment and co-curricular programme for 2026 to 2027, supporting research, organisation and presentation skills.

Key Stage 3

The Senior School provides a broad foundation before GCSE choices. Students develop subject knowledge, literacy, numeracy, practical and creative skills, and increasing independence. Curriculum planning maintains opportunities across the areas identified in section 3 and supports informed choices for Key Stage 4.

Key Stage 4

Students follow a core programme and a range of options. English Language and Literature, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education remain central to provision. Physical education and games, PSHE and careers education support the wider curriculum.

The GCSE provision comprises:

English Language and English Literature; Mathematics; Religious Education.

Separate sciences: Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

French and Spanish.

Geography, History and Citizenship.

Art, Photography, Design and Technology, Drama and Music.

Business Studies, Computer Science, Physical Education and Psychology.

The Year 10 Electives Programme offers the Foundation or Higher Project Qualification, STEM CREST Award and Volunteering. Students may select an elective in place of an option choice in Year 10.

Students are provided with guidance for each pathway and its implications for the student's qualification programme.

Annual curriculum and options information confirm the courses available to each cohort, the combinations that can be timetabled and the progression arrangements. The school reviews its offer in response to student needs, qualification changes and staffing and timetable considerations.

Sixth Form

The Sixth Form provides academic and vocational pathways alongside a wider core curriculum. Students develop the knowledge, independent study skills and confidence needed for higher education, apprenticeships, employment and adult life.

The A Level offer comprises:

Art, Photography, Drama and Music.

Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics and Further Mathematics.

English Literature and French.

Business, Geography, Government and Politics, History, Psychology and Religious Studies.

Vocational provision comprises the CTEC single award in Health and Social Care, the Cambridge Advanced National Alternative Academic Qualifications in Mental Health: Individuals and Society, and Human Biology.

Students may also apply to undertake the Extended Project Qualification.

The wider core curriculum includes PE, RE and Horizons, together with careers education, co-curricular activities and opportunities for leadership. Individual study periods develop purposeful independent learning.

Guidance supports a wide range of destinations, including university, apprenticeships and employment. Specialist support is available for applications to Oxford, Cambridge and international universities, and for pathways such as Medicine and Law.

Students over the age of 18

Provision takes account of the needs of students over 18, including those retaking courses or revisiting content. Subject teachers, tutors and Sixth Form leaders review prior learning, progress and individual circumstances, adapting teaching and arranging additional support where appropriate. These students continue to receive appropriate education, careers guidance and opportunities for personal development.

5 Personal development and preparation for life

Religious education and spiritual development

Religious education forms part of the curriculum throughout the school. Together with collective worship and opportunities for reflection and service, it supports understanding of the school's Catholic ethos, the values of Christ's Gospel and the beliefs and experiences of others.

PSHE and relationships education

Personal, social, health and economic education is planned for students' ages and learning needs. It supports informed decisions, healthy relationships, physical and mental wellbeing, personal safety and financial understanding. Relevant statutory relationships and sex education requirements are addressed through the school's PSHE and associated provision, with detailed arrangements set out in the relevant policy.

Teaching encourages respect for other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Content is taught sensitively and appropriately for students' ages and understanding.

British values and wider understanding

The curriculum actively promotes democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Students learn to consider different perspectives, challenge prejudice and contribute responsibly to their communities. Teaching does not undermine these values. Where political issues are considered, students are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views and partisan political views are not promoted.

Careers education

Students receive accurate, current and impartial careers guidance appropriate to their age. The programme supports informed choices at GCSE, post-16 and beyond, introduces a broad range of careers and encourages students to pursue pathways suited to their interests and potential. Detailed provision is set out in the Careers Policy.

6 Access inclusion and appropriate challenge

All students should be able to access the curriculum and make progress. Teachers use information about prior attainment, current understanding and individual needs to plan appropriate support and challenge. Provision for more able and talented students extends depth, complexity and independence within subjects and through enrichment.

The school identifies barriers to learning and reviews support with students, parents and relevant staff. Information from the SEND and More Able and Talented registers, assessment systems and intervention records inform planning. Staff use this information sensitively and in accordance with the school's data protection arrangements.

For students with SEND, curriculum planning and teaching are adapted to their needs. Support may include accessible resources, adjusted teaching approaches, assistive technology, targeted intervention and specialist advice. Detailed identification, provision and review arrangements are set out in the SEND Policy.

The school makes reasonable adjustments for disabled students to avoid substantial disadvantage, including auxiliary aids and services where required. Support is considered on the basis of need; a formal diagnosis or EHC plan is not a prerequisite for considering reasonable adjustments.

For students with an EHC plan, relevant staff understand the specified educational provision and incorporate it into planning and support. The school works with parents, the responsible local authority and professionals to support delivery and review of the plan. Concerns about provision are raised promptly so that responsibilities and any necessary changes can be addressed through the appropriate process. Annual review arrangements are covered in the SEND Policy.

7 Teaching assessment and learning resources

Teaching enables students to acquire knowledge, increase understanding and develop skills. Teachers use assessment to identify what students know, respond to misconceptions and adapt subsequent teaching. Students receive feedback that helps them understand their progress and improve their work.

Assessment, recording, reporting and homework arrangements are governed by the relevant policies. Assessment information supports curriculum review as well as individual intervention. Where a curriculum adaptation affects the evidence available in a subject, reporting explains the provision followed and any limitations on assessment; the school continues to fulfil its reporting obligations.

Curriculum resources include appropriate practical equipment, texts, digital resources and specialist facilities. Technology supports research, creativity, collaboration and independent learning. Students are taught to use digital tools, including AI, responsibly, to evaluate information and to observe academic integrity and relevant assessment rules. Detailed requirements are set out in the BYOD, AI and safeguarding policies.

8 Co-curricular learning

The co-curricular programme extends learning through sporting, creative, academic, spiritual and practical experiences at all key stages. Students are expected to attend at least one activity each week and are encouraged to participate more widely, with appropriate adjustments to support access.

Activities are managed through Evolve. Clubs link to the Thrive themes, including independent decision-making, challenge, resilience, spirituality, physical and mental wellbeing, and enterprise, helping students recognise and develop skills across the academic year.

9 Individual curriculum adaptations

Principles and decision making

An individual curriculum adaptation changes the learning programme to address a student's circumstances. It may involve adjustments within school, access to specialist provision or support for a documented performance pathway. Any change must preserve a suitable education and be considered alongside the school's equality, attendance and safeguarding responsibilities.

The Head Teacher approves adaptations following consultation with the relevant academic, pastoral and Learning Development staff. Decisions consider the student's views, parents' views, supporting evidence, educational benefit, effects on curriculum breadth and progression, and practical arrangements. The school considers support within the existing timetable before agreeing time away from lessons.

The school retains its own safeguarding responsibilities; working in partnership with parents.

Reviews consider whether the arrangement is meeting its aims and whether further changes are needed. A decision to change or end an arrangement includes consideration of the student's needs, any continuing reasonable adjustments and the support needed for transition.

Elite performance pathways

The school supports the development of students' talents in sport, music, drama and other disciplines. Curriculum adaptations may be considered for students performing at elite or national level or following a clearly evidenced pathway towards that level.

Requests should include evidence of a structured training or development programme, relevant events or commitments, and an explanation of why these cannot reasonably take place outside school hours. General enthusiasm, additional practice or an aspiration alone does not establish the need for regular release from lessons.

The school considers the frequency and duration of the request, the quality of the proposed provision and the effect on learning and wellbeing. English Language and Literature, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education will be protected. Any proposed exception, including a finite performance commitment, requires explicit consideration and suitable arrangements for the learning missed.

Students are supported to keep up with their studies through an agreed plan proportionate to their age and needs. Where a national event conflicts with a mock examination, the school considers an alternative assessment where practicable. The assessment's security and comparability determine how its outcome can be used. External examination requirements remain subject to awarding body rules.

SEND and specialist educational provision

Curriculum adaptations for SEND are considered separately from elite performance requests and are based on access to learning. They may include changes to teaching, resources, subject provision or the timing of intervention. A diagnosis does not by itself determine the appropriate arrangement, and support must respond to the student's actual needs.

Where specialist tuition or other provision outside school is proposed, Learning Development staff evaluate its purpose, suitability and relationship to the school curriculum. The school considers what support and reasonable adjustments it can provide and whether the proposal maintains suitable education. Families are not required to arrange private tuition in place of reasonable adjustments that the school must make.

The learning plan identifies how provision fits together, how progress will be assessed and how the student will retain appropriate access to subjects, peers and wider school life. Responsibility for addressing missed learning is shared through agreed support.

Attendance and reduced timetables

Permission for an adaptation does not automatically determine the attendance code. The Attendance Policy and current registration rules govern recording. Codes for approved educational or sporting activities require the relevant approval, educational purpose and suitable physical supervision; attendance must be confirmed. Independent practice or home tuition is not automatically an approved activity.

A temporary part-time timetable providing less than full-time education is reserved for very exceptional circumstances in the student's best interests. It requires agreement with the parent with whom the student normally lives, a support or reintegration plan, regular reviews and a proposed end date. It is not used to manage behaviour. The school involves the social worker where applicable and discusses arrangements with the local authority where the student has an EHC plan.

Full-time education delivered across settings must be distinguished from reduced education. The appropriate code is selected for each session under the current rules, taking account of compulsory school age. Leave is considered individually, without automatic entitlement based on a performance pathway or diagnosis. Detailed recording and notification procedures belong in the Attendance Policy.

10 Responsibilities monitoring and review

The Governing Body oversees the curriculum and holds school leaders accountable for its quality and compliance. The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for implementation. Academic leaders coordinate provision and evaluate its effectiveness, working with Prep leaders, Heads of Department, subject coordinators, Learning Development staff and Sixth Form leaders.

Subject leaders maintain coherent plans and schemes of work, review progression and ensure that teaching reflects students' needs. Teachers implement these plans, assess learning and communicate concerns about access or progress. Students are supported to engage actively with learning, and parents are kept informed about provision and significant changes.

Curriculum evaluation draws on:

Students' learning, progress, attainment and examination outcomes.

Destinations and readiness for subsequent education, training and employment.

Departmental reviews and meetings with subject and phase leaders.

Quality assurance evidence, including lesson visits and reviews of students' work.

Student and parent feedback.

The effectiveness of SEND support, challenge and individual adaptations.

Findings inform departmental planning and the School Development Plan. Significant changes are considered by the Head Teacher in consultation with the Governing Body. This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner where changes in provision, legislation or guidance require it.

11 Related policies and reference framework

This policy should be read alongside the school's Teaching and Learning; Assessment, Reporting and Recording; SEND; Accessibility Plan; Attendance; PSHE and relevant relationships and sex education; Careers; British Values; Safeguarding; BYOD; AI; as applicable.

The reference framework includes the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended; the applicable Early Years Foundation Stage framework; the Equality Act 2010; the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024; and current DfE guidance. SEND legislation and guidance apply according to the school's status and the provision concerned; the SEND Policy sets out the detailed responsibilities.

Reference sources checked for this draft on 8 October 2026:

Department for Education, Independent school standards guidance, April 2026.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-school-standards-guidance>

Department for Education, Working together to improve school attendance, July 2026, particularly chapters 2 and 8. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Department for Education, Equality Act 2010 advice for schools.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>