

Headteacher's Blog – 31st January 2020

The importance of curriculum

What is the curriculum?

I have just come out of assembly with Year 8. It was an important moment for these students as we introduced them to how their curriculum will be shaped over the coming years. This made me think of the importance of continuing to share with families the work we are doing on ensuring our curriculum is the best it can be for our students, in our context.

The first question we answered was 'What is the curriculum?'. The curriculum is made up of the knowledge and experiences that learners will receive beyond their home environment. If you have seen the curriculum information on our website you will know that we are developing a "Knowledge Engaged" curriculum, which means a mix of knowledge and skills. <https://www.thecoleshillschool.org/parents/curriculum>

We are working with primary and secondary expert teachers from across The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership to develop this curriculum, with History, Science and Modern Foreign Languages currently in place in Year 7 and all subjects from next year. This curriculum is designed to support students to develop their meta-cognitive (thinking and memory) skills, develop independence and contribute positively to society and the wider world. We are passionate about ensuring that students have access to a wide range of curriculum experiences both inside and outside of the classroom. This will help them develop an understanding of the subjects they are learning about in depth and help them develop a sense of curiosity, as well as learning about the wider world and their place in it.

Year 8 Curriculum Choices (Year 8 families will receive a separate letter today)

So what does this mean for our Year 8 students, who are about to make some decisions about the next stage in their education journey?

It means that students in Year 8 will be able to make some choices about the subjects they study in greater depth in Year 9, some of which they will go onto study in Year 10 and 11 for GCSE/BTEC. It is important that students have a broad and balanced curriculum at this stage in their education and so, along with the core subjects of English, Maths, Science, PE and RE, all students will continue to study the Modern Foreign Language they have studied in Year 8. So far students will only have had one and half school years of languages with our fabulous languages teachers and so we want them to continue to develop their understanding and appreciation of languages until at least the end of Year 9. On the day we leave the European Union it is more important than ever that we work hard to keep students' awareness of the world around them as broad and rich as possible.

All students who start their curriculum in Year 9 2020 will also study a humanities option of either Geography or History and a creative option, taken from Art, Dance, Drama, Food, Music, Technology (Resistant Materials or Textiles). It is so important that students have an opportunity to continue to develop their creative skills, which support them in range of ways but also ensure they continue to develop as Coleshill Learners within the creative sphere. Students will then have the choice of two additional subjects to study in further depth as well.

From the five options chosen, students will be able to then rank their subjects in preference during Year 9, with the plan being they continue four option subjects from Year 9 into 10 at GCSE/BTEC.

Outside of the main curriculum in lessons there is a lot going on....

To support students' creativity in the current Year 9 we will be working towards Arts Mark; this is a national award which recognises the school's work in developing the arts. All students in Year 9 will be having days off timetable to work on aspects of Music, Dance, Drama and Art, based around themes. This will be in combination with existing clubs and activities within these curriculum areas.

STEM is a curriculum area of the school which has gone from strength over the last few years. We recently had a fantastic day with 'Solutions for the Planet' where Year 8 students worked together to develop ideas for how to tackle climate change. We have a flourishing STEM club after school and lots of amazing STEM activities happening in lessons.

Trips and visits form a big part of our curriculum, with students being given opportunities to take part in a range of activities. Some of these are local trips, such as a Jewellery Workshop in the Jewellery Quarter, a visit to a local Construction Site for Year 9 students and a visit to Mira Technology Park for Year 10 students. Other trips are more further afield, such as the residential trip to PGL in Lincoln for Year 7, a visit to the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford Upon Avon and we even have international trips including Euro Disney for Year 8, Krakow including a visit to Auschwitz for Year 9 and for the first time a team of Year 11 and Sixth Form students going to Tanzania on World Challenge in July.

Curriculum is also about developing The Coleshill Learner and a big part of that for our students is leadership. Our fantastic Duke of Edinburgh scheme is a good example of this. Last year over 150 students achieved their Bronze award and this year and we have a number of students going for Silver. The organisation and resilience needed to complete the expeditions is testament to the hard work of these students and the staff who work with them.

So what is the curriculum? It is everything we do. It is exciting, it is ever changing and we are always finding new ways to make it the best that it can be to suit the needs of the students who we work with, who themselves are growing up in a world which is very different to the one we grew up in and will require them to have very different knowledge and skills to be successful and happy citizens.

Year 8 Options Assembly



Big Ideas STEM Day



Dance

Drama



Art