



ABINGDON

LOWER SCHOOL
CURRICULUM
2012

Introduction

The Lower School curriculum aims to provide a solid foundation for further study in the Middle and Upper School. Boys study Latin and two modern foreign languages in the Lower School, and then have the opportunity to take up Ancient Greek and/or another modern language in the third form. We are careful not to assume too much about levels of attainment, as opposed to potential, when boys enter the School.

Further information about the Middle School and Sixth Form curricula may be obtained by downloading documents on our website: www.abingdon.org.uk and choosing "Academic" and then "The Curriculum".

There is a qualifying examination at the end of the Second Year, which boys must pass in order to enter the Middle School.

Period allocations (50 period fortnight)

	<i>Tutor</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Maths</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Mod Lang</i>	<i>Games /PE</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>History</i>	<i>Geog</i>	<i>Religious Studies</i>	<i>Drama</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Creative Arts</i>	<i>ICT & Library</i>
First year	3	5	5	6	5	4	5	2	3	2	2	2	4	2
Second year	3	5	5	6	5	4	4	3	2	3	2	2	4	2

Creative Arts consists of Art (painting, drawing, ceramics) and Design & Technology.

All boys have two timetabled tutor periods, one period of "Be the Best" in addition to seeing their tutor or housemaster at morning registration daily.

For further information contact the appropriate head of department listed in the sections below, or

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Art and Design

Head of department: J P Nairne

Everyone does Art in the Lower School. This continues into the Middle School in the third year, after which Art may be chosen as a GCSE option and later on for AS/A level.

Over the three years, before GCSEs, as wide a range of approaches and media as possible will be taught, including painting, computer graphics, printmaking, ceramics, card, wire and plaster sculpture, collage and a variety of drawing approaches and media. The department is keen to encourage work that develops from an understanding of modern and contemporary artists, makers and designers. There is also an emphasis on different types of drawing as fundamental to expression in the subject.

1st Year

Students have one lesson a week of art and design through the whole year. The aim is to build confidence, working and developing ideas in a range of media using a variety of approaches. Sketchbooks will be provided and used for short preps and other classwork. These will be taken on into the second year.

2nd Year

Students have one lesson a week through the whole year. A positive enjoyable art experience is sought, and like the first year, a range of approaches and techniques will be taught depending in part on the teacher but building on previously developed ideas and skills, often with an emphasis on a particular artist or artistic movement as inspiration. Through the year, time will be spent on some of the basic principles of drawing through a sequence of short exercises. Sketchbook work will be further developed and again short preps will be set on a regular basis.

Extra Art is encouraged and the department is available after school in the afternoons and lunchtimes for students to develop work in a variety of media, with specific lower school clubs. Further details of the department's activities can be found on the art and design pages of the school website. http://www.abingdon.org.uk/art_and_design/

Drama

Head of department: J H Taylor

Drama is taught throughout the school at Abingdon, and is one of the subjects that naturally extends into the School's programme of extra-curricular (or "Other Half") activities. Boys can study the subject at all levels and gain academic qualifications in it, as well as auditioning for large- and small-scale productions that have nothing to do with the classroom. In 1st and 2nd year, every pupil receives one period of drama tuition per week, but he can also apply to join the Lower School Drama Club, which rehearses on Monday and / or Wednesday afternoons, and stages one extra-curricular production each year.

Drama has a three-dimensional character, and in the Lower School course, pupils are made aware of all the ways in which we communicate. They are introduced to specific skills, shown how to bring ideas to life as a performer, and to stretch their imaginations. In the process, they learn how to explore short texts and create simple scripts. Perhaps most importantly, they are encouraged to work well with others.

Our first priority is to establish confidence and enjoyment in performance, followed by an appreciation of the demands of group work, and an understanding of the need for control and self-discipline in order to succeed. In short, we aim to make the weekly lessons "fun, physical and focused!" A session usually begins with a physical warm-up or concentration exercise, before focusing on specific tasks, usually involving improvisations or explorations of texts that require pupils to work in small groups, making suggestions, developing ideas and guiding each other towards a short presentation to the other members of the class. Pupils then offer each other positive feedback before learning points are underlined by the teacher. In the second term, as part of the course, all 1st and 2nd year boys take part in a Lower School Drama Evening, which provides an opportunity to extend their skills through public performance of short scenes on the Amey Theatre stage.

By the end of the Lower School course, pupils will have gained a broader understanding of the demands of performance and acquired skills and knowledge to help them create effective presentations, adopt straightforward roles, achieve ways of telling and structuring stories in drama, consider the needs of an audience, and explore a variety of voice and movement techniques (for example, mime, choral delivery, variations in pace, gesture and body language). Thereafter, they can opt to study drama in 3rd year, where the course shadows many aspects of AQA's Performing Arts GCSE course, and serves as an effective introduction to the AQA GCSE Drama course that occupies the 4th and 5th years.

Design & Technology

Head of department: D M Hughes

Entrants into the first year will experience Design and Technology for one period a week throughout the year. During this time the boys will come into contact with, and gain confidence in using, a wide range of materials and manufacturing processes. They will undertake many practical projects that will develop both their understanding of the subject and, most importantly, their confidence in a workshop environment. They will also begin to experience 'the design process' investigating existing products and exploring the role and responsibilities of a commercial designer.

In the second year pupils continue to develop their skills in Design and Technology. Throughout this time they will tackle more challenging projects, which are designed to further develop their making skills, materials knowledge and understanding of the design process. They will be encouraged to research problems, produce imaginative ideas and develop exciting solutions. They are encouraged to make sensible design decisions and begin to consider the environment and sustainability throughout their projects.

The department has recently had a Lower School specific workshop commissioned and all pupils are given the opportunity to make use of the facilities to further develop their interest in the subject during the 'Other Half'.

English

Head of department: K T Carson

Creativity is at the centre of English lessons in Lower School at Abingdon. Lessons are fun and active, placing a large emphasis on pupils unlocking, nurturing, and revelling in the development of their own creative potential. Conscious that there are more metaphors in Manchester than Marvell, we pay particular attention to the development of pupils' own creative writing skills, and to making boys increasingly aware that they are consistently manipulating language creatively throughout their everyday conversations and interaction.

During their time in Lower School, pupils are taught in mixed ability classes by one English teacher. All boys read a broad range of texts and genres, with novels, plays, poetry, and non-fiction studied in every class each academic year. Texts and authors taught at present range from 'classics' such as *Beowulf*, Shakespeare, James Joyce and *Frankenstein* (always approached in an accessible manner), to 'young adult' fiction by authors such as Tim Bowler, Michael Morpurgo, Robert Muchamore and Alan Gibbons (all of whom have visited School in recent years to work with and speak to pupils). Lower School boys are also expected and encouraged to read regularly and widely outside the classroom. Our aims in all of the above are that pupils will gain an initial sense of the scope and variety of English Literature, and that we will engender in the boys a love of reading and language that will endure beyond their time with us in the classroom.

Lower School is also a time to consolidate and improve the technical accuracy of pupils' writing at word, sentence, paragraph, and whole text levels, as all future success in English is built upon the clarity and precision of boys' written expression. For similar reasons, close attention is paid to developing a vocabulary of critical terms that enables pupils to explore with some rigour how exactly it is that writers in all genres achieve particular effects in their work. By the time that they move into Middle School, all boys are prepared for the close reading skills and the conscious crafting of language that is required of them at GCSE level.

Geography

Head of department: I C Fishpool

The course aims to provide a broad curriculum of relevant and contemporary topics, and provide a strong grounding in the understanding and application of geographical skills.

During the first year five themes are explored: each unit is studied for a half term period with the second half of the summer term reserved for revision and preparation of the end of year examination. The themes are: Geographical Skills and an introduction to the UK, Aspects of weather and climate with specific focus on the UK, Rivers and flooding, Where should we get our energy from? and The geography of sport - this topic involves the study of all aspects of the location, structure and globalisation of sport industry. The forthcoming London Olympics will form a focus for this unit.

The second year is also split into 5 themes. Although a regional approach is used the underlying causes of development, globalisation and inequalities will be explored during the course of the year. The themes are: Development in Ghana, The rise of China, A post-industrial economy – the case of the USA, Globalisation, The geography of Crime - a study of how crime and geography are closely linked. In particular how an understanding of socio-economic and urban environmental geography help to solve / predict crimes. In recent years Thames Valley Police have given a presentation as part of the course.

This course develops themes from the Oxford Geography Project, now called geog.123.

History

Head of department: D R McGill

The History Department places emphasis on bringing history to life. We hope to encourage a real enthusiasm for, and interest in, the past and we also strive to develop skills of analysis and evaluation – vital tools for effective study in many disciplines. A lively spirit of intellectual questioning is encouraged and boys learn to develop their own opinions and make their own judgments.

First Year

After a brief introductory unit looking at the 'detective' skills required of a historian, this is a year of essentially medieval history, taking as its theme: 'The beginning of the English'. Boys find out about Anglo-Saxon invasion and settlement, undertake a case study of the Sutton Hoo Ship burial, evaluate the heroic local figure of King Alfred and examine the impact of Viking and Norman invasion. They also weigh up the relative ruthlessness of medieval kings, as well as investigating other significant historical events of the middle ages such as the murder of Thomas Becket, the Crusades or the Black Death. Boys are encouraged to undertake individual research on medieval castles and to participate in a thoroughly enjoyable day trip to Warwick Castle.

Second Year

This is a year of early modern history. The central theme is 'Continuity and Change' and the main aim is to examine the challenge to established ideas and institutions seen in that period. Pupils study topics in English history from Richard III through to the Civil War, examining the changing nature of the monarch's power and the challenges to it. They also broaden their focus and examine the significant changes that took place as a result of 'Exploration and Conquest' and 'Renaissance and Reformation'. The Spanish Armada is used as a case study to develop skills in handling source material and opportunity is given for individual research on the fascinating kings and queens of the period. A trip to the London Dungeon gives the opportunity for boys to investigate the impact that significant events such as the Plague and the Great Fire had on London, and to discover the gorier side of life in the capital, whether it be the grim reality of the dungeons, the controversial case of Jack the Ripper or the mythical tale of Sweeney Todd.

ICT

Head of department: D Haworth

The work of the ICT Department is intended to encourage the use of Information Technology in a variety of contexts. Pupils are given opportunities to acquire competence, capability and cross-curricular ICT skills through the implementation, use and evaluation of a range of Information Technology methods and by independent learning.

The department teaches skills in the first two years, covering such areas as: Microsoft Office applications, multimedia graphics and presentation, computer-aided design & programming, modelling and simulation, writing for the web, safety online and data handling. An extended project at the end of each year allows pupils to practice using all of these skills together to solve a problem, challenging pupils' creativity and ingenuity.

The work of the ICT department is not oriented towards an examination and formal instruction is only given in the first two years. In practice its aim is to facilitate the use of ICT in a broad range of subjects throughout the whole school so that staff and pupils can use ICT to enhance them. Pupils are encouraged to develop informed, intelligent and confident ICT abilities and attitudes which, as well as being of value in school, prepare them for their further education and careers.

Latin

Head of department: Dr C Burnand

All Lower School boys study Latin for both years using the Cambridge Latin Course. The aim is for the boys to gain a secure grasp of the basics of the language for the start of the GCSE course. This also makes boys familiar with the way that English operates, as they begin to think about the differences and similarities between the structures of the two languages. Reading and grammar work in class is reinforced by homework, which can consist of vocabulary or grammar learning, written exercises, or preparing reading for the next lesson.

The stories in the coursebooks are extended by a wealth of background information on Pompeii, Alexandria and Roman Britain, and it is seen as an important element of the course that the boys develop an understanding of the world in which the language they are learning was spoken. The material in the books is taken further by projects which the boys pursue through their own independent research in the library and on the Internet. There are also two visits for the whole year group, to Fishbourne at the end of the first year, and to Bath during the second year, since these are both places which are central to the course. There are also opportunities for more practical activities during the course, whether that is making a model of Fishbourne Palace, a Roman-style mosaic, or a theatrical mask.

Mathematics

Head of department: Mrs V D Penrose

The Lower School Mathematics curriculum is broadly in line with the National Numeracy Framework, incorporating much of the extension material. Students entering Abingdon School have all reached a certain level of mathematical proficiency, but have various experiences of the subject, so the principal aim of the teaching in these years is to ensure that all boys obtain the necessary foundation for success further up the school. The content of the syllabus includes arithmetic, algebra and graphs, geometry and measurement, statistics and probability.

The approach at Abingdon is to give as much opportunity as possible for open-ended tasks as possible to give students the chance to develop their own mathematical thinking. This is supported with syllabus material to give students the tools with which to explore mathematical ideas. There will also be opportunities for using computers to do mathematical tasks.

All first year classes are taught in tutor groups for the whole year. Setting does take place for the start of the second year, with one set usually moving at a faster pace than the other two. All sets will cover the same syllabus material and have similar opportunities for extension work.

All Lower School students are entered for the UKMT Junior Maths Challenge, and a good number

of students progress to the Olympiad rounds of this competition each year. In addition, there is an annual Team Challenge competition held in school, specifically for Lower School pupils and a bi-annual visit from the Millennium Maths Project's Hands-on Maths Roadshow. There is also a weekly Maths Club, where Middle School pupils support Lower School on Mathematical puzzles and problems.

Modern Languages

Co-ordinator: A J Loughe

Our aim is to give boys an introduction to language learning and to promote their enjoyment of it. We want them to start thinking about differences between languages and to look for links between the language they are learning, their mother tongue and any other language of which they have knowledge, including Latin.

The boys therefore spend the first half of their first year at Abingdon studying French. They are taught in mixed ability form groups, but we cater for all the different levels of experience of French – from several years to none. At the half-way point, just after Christmas, the boys take a test and after this, they all begin German. At the end of the first year they then decide which of the two languages they will choose to take forward as their main foreign language into the 2nd and 3rd year. In the third year they will also be able to choose a second or even third foreign language from French, German, Spanish and Mandarin.

The boys have 5 periods per fortnight, and at some stage in the year normally have some contact with the foreign language assistant. Early lessons aim to accustom them to hearing and using the foreign language so that lessons can be conducted for the most part in that language. They will be encouraged to develop their ability to understand the written and spoken word, as well as to speak and write. Grammatical concepts are taught, but the emphasis is on enabling the boys to use the language they are learning creatively and in a variety of contexts.

A wide variety of games and other activities, often on the interactive white board, are used to reinforce their learning, and the boys also have access to the school's computer suites. When using the computers the focus is not only on practising writing and completing language exercises, but also on presenting work, making use of a variety of Microsoft applications.

Lower School boys are also warmly encouraged to take part in the Languages Club, where they can extend their experience of an existing language or have a taste of another. The language assistants, U6th formers and 3rd years are on hand to play games with them.

Another activity, which has become popular with the boys, is our annual visit to either France or Germany, which takes place towards the end of the summer term. We also have other occasional events, such as a trip to a German market and visits from touring theatre companies.

Music

Head of department: M A Stinton

The overall aim of the Music Department is to encourage and promote a lifelong knowledge and love of music through "hands-on" experience as performers and in guided listening of and interaction with a broad spectrum of music.

Our first priority is to establish an active involvement in music for each and every pupil through the playing of a musical instrument and the use of the voice so that the boys may benefit from the many music-making opportunities at the school, particularly in ensemble work.

The initial emphasis for boys entering the First Year, then, is to encourage them to try a musical instrument with a view to taking weekly individual lessons with the school's large and experienced body of visiting music teachers.

Our experience is that the majority of boys have already started taking music lessons before joining the school.

The First Year pupils have two music lessons per fortnight. One is a class singing lesson to prepare the boys for performances as a whole year group. The first of these takes place in the large-scale Christmas Concerts at the end of the first term. The other lesson comprises the study of musical instruments, some guided listening in topics and work on notation and simple word-setting.

In the Second Year the boys have one singing lesson and one class music lesson per fortnight. The singing lesson prepares the boys for their year group performance in the New Year Concert at the beginning of the Lent Term. The class music lesson introduces the boys to the main three periods of music history - Baroque, Classical and Romantic - looking at representative composers and their music in a socio-political context. The topics include, respectively, The Grand Tour, Musical Patronage and The Rise of Nationalism.

There are a large number of activities which are laid on for the benefit of Lower School pupils and they include the following ensembles: Chapel Choir, School Choir, Junior Strings, Second Orchestra, Second Wind Band, Second Year Drum Circle and Lower School Choir. The smaller ensembles include junior flute and clarinet ensembles. The Lower School also competes as a "House" in the annual House Singing Competition. From time to time there are Music Theatre productions (e.g. "Bugsy Malone"), which, together with our regular weekly informal concerts, provide solo playing opportunities in a relaxed atmosphere, essential experience for developing musical talent.

One of the last concerts of the academic year comprises the Lower School Gala Concert in late June. This is an opportunity for the pupils of the Lower School to showcase their music in solos, ensembles, an orchestra, a band and a Lower School Choir in which both First and Second Year Choirs are brought together. The event provides a fitting celebratory finale of all that the boys have achieved, musically, over the year.

More advanced pupils have also played in the school's senior ensembles when they are deemed to be able to make a contribution and to benefit from that experience.

Religious Studies

Head of department: G R Moody

The course aims to cover a wide range of relevant and interesting topics, so as to provide a full introduction to the study of religion and religious ideas, while developing key skills in religious studies.

Each year consists of three courses of roughly equal length.

The first year begins with a study of Hinduism or Sikhism, including such diverse aspects as deities, worship, pilgrimage and moral issues. This acts as an introduction to the study of a religion. Next comes a study of the Old Testament, covering a selection of the main episodes in the Hebrew Scriptures, which introduces the study of a religious text. In the third term comes a study of Christianity, in particular the development of the Christian Church.

The second year begins with a study of Judaism and its beliefs and practices, with special consideration of the Holocaust. Next we consider of the life of Jesus, allowing space for an in depth study of the central figure of the Western World, from his approach to outcasts to the death and resurrection that complete his life. Lastly a study of Buddhism provides a strong contrast with which to end the Lower School, with topics ranging from meditation to the Four Noble Truths.

Science

Co-ordinator: D J Bickerton

Science in the Lower School is divided into the Physical and Biological sciences. A wide range of topics are introduced closely following the 13+ Common Entrance syllabus.

In Biology, topics such as the heart and blood circulation, respiration and breathing, food and diet, are all investigated through experiments. Pupils learn about cells using microscopes. Open-ended practical investigations, such as mapping the tongue for taste sensors, the dispersal of sycamore fruits, and food preservation, are a feature of the first year work.

Bunsen burners are used early in the Physical science course and there are a good number of simple chemical experiments from which pupils are able to start to build a theoretical framework to help them understand reactions between atoms and molecules.

Electronic circuitry is another popular topic and apparatus from the main Physics department is frequently used in pupil experiments and teacher demonstrations. The topic on space is enlivened with the help of excellent videos and some intriguing calculations.

Experiments designed to speed up the development of the ability to think scientifically underpin the teaching of many of the science course topics. The science teaching takes place in fully equipped laboratories, complete with interactive whiteboards. There is a dedicated science technician and preparation room for the Physical science component.

Sport and Physical Education

Head of department: A S Hall

In the Lower School, the boys have two lessons of Sport and Physical Education per week. During these lessons the focus is mainly on Abingdon School's main team sports, as a number of boys have not been exposed to these skills in their previous schools. The boys enjoy a rotation of activities which includes rugby, hockey, cricket, tennis, athletics, gymnastics and swimming. Twice a year the boys participate in a batch of fitness tests, which are entered onto a database. During their time in the Lower and Middle School, a profile is built up of the individual's sporting achievements and progress, which are reported on at the end of each academic year.

The emphasis is on individual effort and attainment, whilst promoting sporting excellence. The Department aims to maintain and/or stimulate pupil interest and enjoyment in Sport and Physical Education, thereby promoting and stimulating a long-term interest in physical activity and a healthy lifestyle. We look to create an environment which enables pupils to develop a range of desirable personal qualities such as politeness, perseverance, initiative and independence. The establishment of pupil self-esteem through the development of physical confidence is a major aim of the Department. We seek to enable pupils to work independently and as part of a team in varied activities, so that Sport and Physical Education is seen to contribute to the development of core skills such as communication.