



ABINGDON



LOWER SCHOOL  
CURRICULUM

# CONTENTS

Welcome	2
Be More Griffen	3
The Other Half	4
Academic Support	5
English as an Additional Language	6

## **Subject information:**

Art & Design	7
Computer Science	8
Drama	9
English	10
Geography	11
History	12
Latin	13
Maths	14
Modern Languages	15
Music	16
Philosophy & Theology	17
Product Design & Engineering	18
Science	19
Sport & Physical Education	20

# WELCOME

The First and Second Years at Abingdon are an incredibly exciting time of exploration for your child, and our broad curriculum is designed to support that journey.

While we emphasise academic rigour, we also ensure there are plenty of opportunities for your child to have fun, undertake independent research, and develop their creative skills. This balanced approach provides a solid educational foundation, preparing them to flourish as they progress throughout the school.

We offer an exceptionally wide curriculum in the Lower School so your child can experience a maximum number of subjects before they narrow down their choices for GCSE. Alongside core subjects like English, Maths, Biology, Physics, and Chemistry, your child will also study:

- History
- Geography
- Latin
- Philosophy & Theology
- Art
- Product Design & Engineering
- Drama
- Music
- Computer Science
- Physical Education and Sports

In the First Year, all students study both German and French for half a year each. This gives them a taste of both languages before they choose one to continue with in the Second Year. They will also select a second language from French, German, Spanish, or Mandarin.

Upon joining us, pupils will be allocated into a class in which they will be taught all of their subjects, fostering a sense of belonging and support from day one.

# BE MORE GRIFFEN



Our PSHCE *Be More Griffen* Programme has been designed to encourage your child to be:

- **Growth-focussed:** Believing in themselves and reflecting carefully on how to improve
- **Responsible:** Thinking about their own actions, putting their values into practice, and being a good team player
- **Independent:** Being able to set their own goals and coach themselves effectively
- **Fearless:** Prepared to take on new challenges and push themselves out of their comfort zone
- **Flexible:** Ready to adapt to new situations and show resilience when things don't go as planned
- **Empathetic:** Able to listen to and understand the ideas and views of other people
- **Nurturing:** Supportive of others, both in school and in the wider community

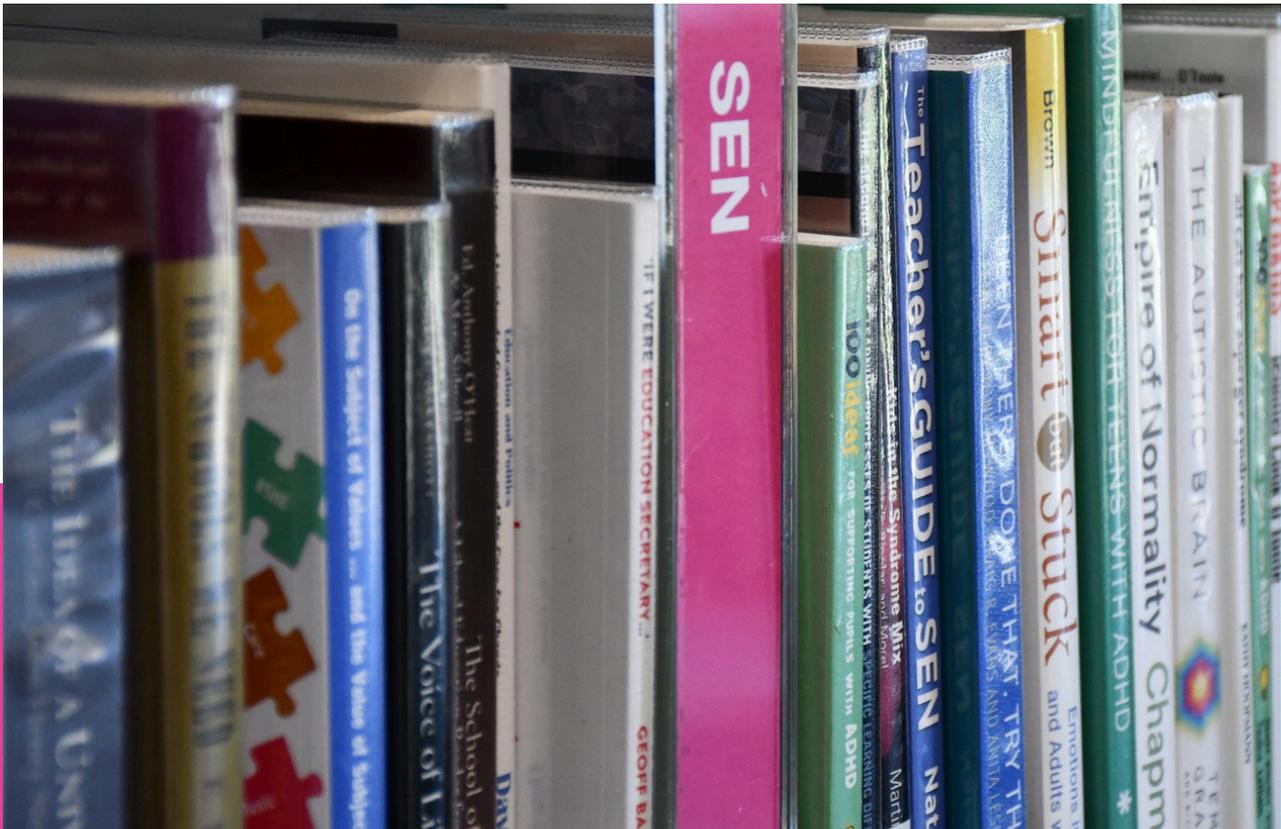
Hearing from a number of inspirational external speakers each year, pupils have two timetabled tutor periods and one period of “Be More Griffen” once a fortnight in addition to seeing their tutor or head of house at morning registration daily.

# THE OTHER HALF



Integrated into the timetable, our enviable Other Half co-curricular programme provides your child with an extensive variety of activities and subjects.

They will have the opportunity to become more proficient in an existing interest, learn a new skill, and lend their support within the wider community. In turn, this will help them to develop important life skills including societal awareness, leadership, independence, perseverance, resilience, empathy, patience and kindness.



## ACADEMIC SUPPORT

The specialist teachers in our Academic Support department are here for all students, whether or not they have a formally identified Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND).

We offer lessons on a rotational basis to avoid impacting academic classes. In these sessions, we provide tailored support for:

- students with an identified SEND, we focus on specific areas like literacy for students with dyslexia or organizational skills for those with ADHD.
- all other students, we teach general skills that can be applied across all subjects, such as workload management and effective revision and study techniques.

Students can request support for themselves, or be referred by a tutor, Head of House, or teacher. We also offer one-off sessions as part of the 'Be More Griffen' programme and provide all students with advice on exam revision strategies.

Our department also carries out preliminary screenings for specific learning differences and helps determine if a student needs exam arrangements for later years. We also monitor the effectiveness of any previously granted arrangements.



Katy Lee: Head of EAL

## ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Approximately 150 of our students have English as a second or third language. Most do not need extra support, but help is available for those who need it. In Lower School, this takes the form of one to one support to work on spelling, grammar and writing skills. All our students take First Language English GCSE in both Language and Literature.

We work closely with your child's main English teacher to make sure our lessons are relevant to what is being taught in class. We may use the lesson time to improve upon classwork, or prepare ahead of the next English lesson.

Our initial entrance tests are a good indicator of those who may benefit from support. In addition, teachers in the English and History departments will often make referrals if they notice a student is struggling. Some students self-refer because they want to build their confidence in speaking and writing English. It is usual to have one lesson a week and lessons are normally one-to-one. We work hard to fit the lessons into lunch or after school slots, to make sure the students are not missing class. EAL lessons are charged to the student's bill, unless the student is on a reduced timetable.

## ART & DESIGN

We want to help your child feel confident and enjoy art. We'll introduce them to a variety of ways to create and develop their ideas, from studying other artists to drawing from observation to using their own imagination.

Your child will work with a wide range of materials and techniques, including painting, printmaking, ceramics, sculpture, and computer graphics. We'll also explore art from different cultures and historical periods, encouraging your child to think about what inspires artists. They will be provided with sketchbooks and folders for their classwork and will use iPads to support and extend their creative process.

For those who want to do more art, we offer extra art clubs, including a Ceramics club for younger students. We regularly enter student artwork into competitions and display it around the school.



# COMPUTER SCIENCE

In Lower School Computer Science lessons, your child will learn problem solving and algorithmic thinking alongside programming, including text based programming. They will also learn about binary numbers and computer logic, how networks including *the internet* work; and the ethical issues that arise in a world dominated by algorithms and immense computer power.

Programming structures are introduced in a practical way. The approach of breaking problems down and removing unnecessary detail to allow an algorithmic solution is relevant across the curriculum, and indeed to life.

Your child will see where structured problem solving has resulted in breakthroughs in the past, as well as looking to future challenges.

They will develop confidence and skills in their use of technology (which in turn will be of benefit in their other subjects), as they study topics from AI to hardware.



# DRAMA

Drama is a core part of the curriculum and about so much more than just acting. Your child can study drama academically, earning qualifications, but can also audition for a variety of productions outside the classroom. We focus on communication, helping your child develop their imagination and bring ideas to life. They'll learn how to work with others, explore short texts, and create simple scripts.

In the First Year, the focus is on "drama," building your child's confidence and enjoyment of acting in a supportive, pressure-free environment. They'll work on group dynamics, movement, and voice, often through improvisation. Each session starts with a warm-up, moves into specific tasks, and ends with a short presentation and constructive feedback.

In the Second Year, the scope widens to "theatre," where students learn about the traditions and conventions of formal performance. They'll study different theatrical styles and periods, performing short play extracts and continuing to create their own original work. In Lower School, your child will have one drama lesson each week. They may also join the Lower School Drama Club.



## ENGLISH

Creativity and engaging teaching and learning is at the heart of English lessons in Lower School at Abingdon. Lessons are fun and active, placing a large emphasis on your child unlocking, nurturing, and revelling in the development of their own creative potential.

Your child will be taught in a mixed ability class and will usually have one teacher throughout their time in Lower School. All pupils 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 range from contemporary to classic works. We will also encourage your child to read regularly and widely outside the classroom to develop a love of literature which endures beyond the classroom.

We use these first two years at Abingdon to consolidate and improve the technical accuracy of pupils' writing at word, sentence, paragraph and whole text levels, and pay close attention to developing vocabulary and refining grammar, punctuation and spelling. Additionally, we will develop your child's exam technique in our end of year exams.



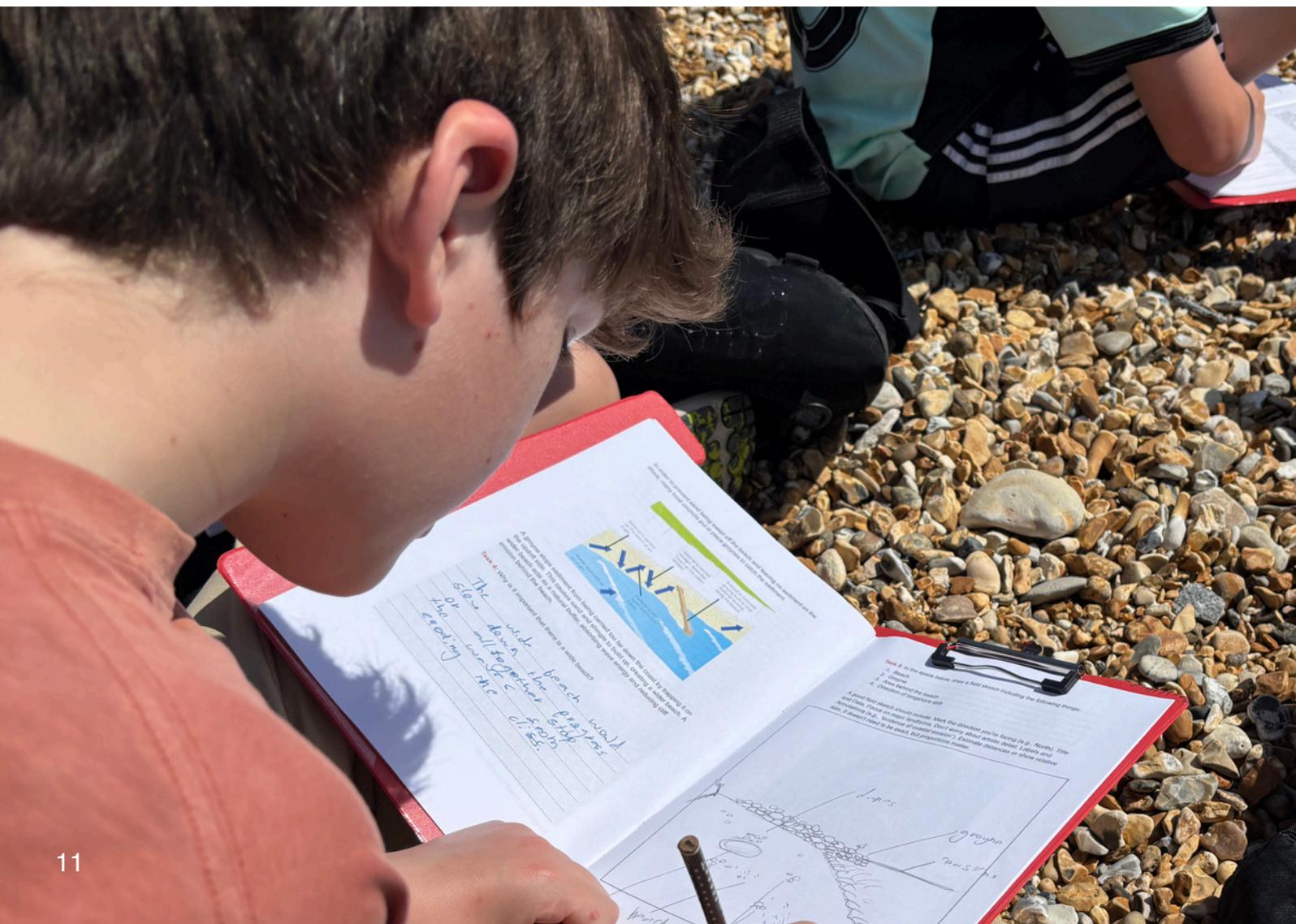
# GEOGRAPHY

The aim of Geography is to help us understand how people, places, and environments are connected, while giving pupils the skills to tackle global challenges and appreciate the world's diversity. We offer a broad curriculum that covers relevant and contemporary topics, giving your child a strong foundation in key geographical skills.

Geography in Lower School covers both human and physical geography equally to demonstrate how interrelated the world is.

In the First Year, pupils will explore several physical geography themes, including the map skills and basic cartography, geography of the UK, digital mapping, and coastal environments. We also regularly use our GIS room (Geographical Information Systems) to help students develop their spatial analysis skills using programmes like Digimaps and ArcGIS.

In the Second Year, the focus shifts to human geography and the concept of inequality. We'll take a regional approach to explore the causes of development and globalisation. Pupils will also examine modern geopolitical events and learn about the impact of the fashion industry. The course culminates in an evaluation of how people impact these areas and explores potential solutions for a more sustainable and equitable world.



# HISTORY

The History Department brings history to life. We aim to spark a genuine enthusiasm for the past while teaching your child how to analyse and evaluate information - skills that are essential for many subjects. We encourage them to ask questions and form their own opinions, all while learning how historians construct different interpretations of the past.

In the First Year, we explore how invasion, conquest, and migration shaped British society from c.400 to 1400. Your child will tackle big questions such as: "Did the Vikings get an unfair reputation?" and "How far did migration shape Medieval Britain?" or "Why are the Silk Roads still remembered as the 'highways of history'?"

In their Second Year, the focus shifts to power from c.1200 to 1918, asking where it lay: with rulers, religion, or rebels. We'll investigate topics such as the legacy of the Magna Carta, the reasons for the abolition of the slave trade, and whether rights were won or given to working-class people.



# LATIN

All Lower School pupils study Latin for both years using the new *de Romanis* course. The aim is for your child to gain a secure grasp of the basics of the Latin language. This will also help to make them 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 course books are extended by a wealth of background information on Roman gods, mythology and history, enabling your child to 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 pupils pursue through their own independent research. The course is supported by relevant visits for the whole year group, for example to Bath at the end of the First Year, and Caerleon in the Second Year. There are also opportunities for more practical activities during the course.



# MATHS

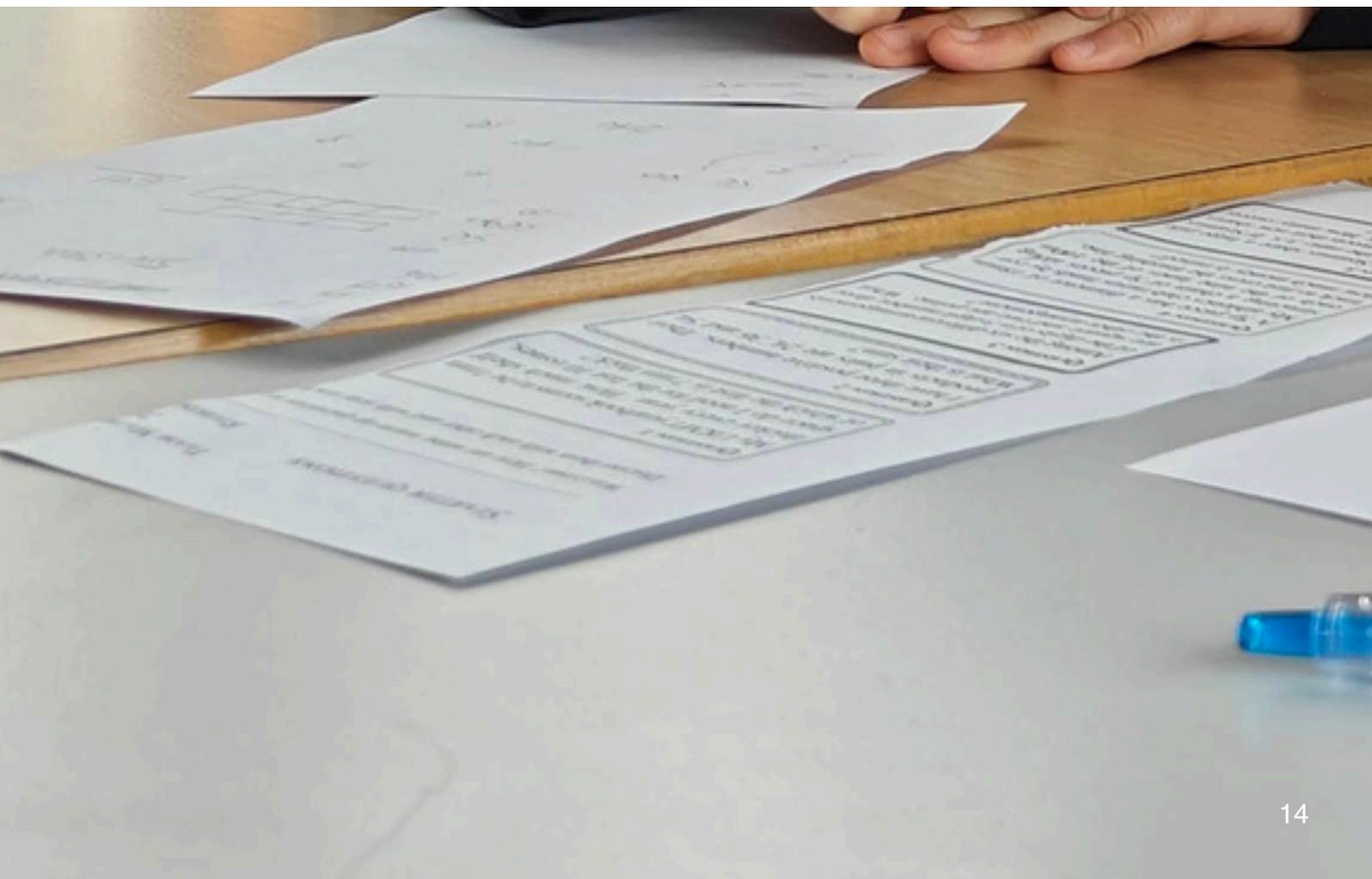
Our curriculum is designed to build on the foundational skills your child already has, while ensuring everyone gains the necessary knowledge to succeed in the years ahead.

We cover all the essentials: arithmetic, algebra, graphs, geometry, measurement, statistics, and probability.

As your child progresses, they'll move from focusing solely on numbers to exploring broader mathematical concepts. We encourage them to develop their own mathematical thinking through open-ended tasks that are supported by the core curriculum.

All First Year classes are taught in tutor groups. At the start of the Second Year, students are placed into sets, with one group typically moving at a faster pace. However, all sets cover the same material and have the same opportunities for extension work.

Beyond the classroom, your child can participate in the UKMT Junior Maths Challenge and we enter a team into the annual Team Maths Challenge competition. We also run a weekly Maths Puzzle Club specifically for Lower School students who want extra opportunities to use their problem-solving skills.



# MODERN LANGUAGES

Our aim is to give pupils an introduction to language learning with a major focus on enjoying their development as linguists. We want them to start thinking about, and looking for, links between the languages they learn, their mother tongue and any other language of which they have knowledge, including Latin.

In the first half of their First Year at Abingdon, pupils study German. They take an end of course test just before February half term, after which they begin learning French. All pupils are taught in mixed ability form groups, but we cater for all the different levels of previous language experience. Pupils are taught by the same specialist teacher throughout the year.

In the Second Year, pupils study two languages and may choose either to continue with French or German, and begin learning either Spanish or Mandarin, or to continue with both French and German.

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 themselves. Grammatical concepts are taught, but the emphasis is on enabling the pupils to use the language they are learning creatively and in a variety of contexts.

A wide variety of games and other activities are used to reinforce their learning, and pupils also have access to a broad range of online platforms to assist them with vocabulary and grammar practice, as well as online games. We offer a wide range of competitions and cultural activities to promote pupils' enjoyment of other cultures beyond the classroom.



# MUSIC

The aim of the Music Department is to encourage and engage all pupils in the Lower School in the discovery and understanding of music in its many guises. Our music course focuses on three aspects including musical theory and language, introduction to musical instruments and history, and a creative component through composition using music technology. All pupils in First Year are able to access the taster scheme in which they learn an orchestral instrument during the Michaelmas Term, hopefully beginning a musical journey which allows them to benefit from the many music-making opportunities in the school alongside participation in the myriad of ensembles.

The study of music theory and language is a vital tool in pupils being able to describe and understand the music they encounter and much of the first year course is based on building this foundation. This in turn enables pupils to craft their own skill in creating music as they progress through the Lower School. With two lessons per fortnight in both years, there is a variety of musical experiences and learning opportunities for all pupils.

Of course a significant aspect of a pupils' musical experience is based on the wider musical opportunities, events and concerts. There are bespoke Lower School ensembles including an orchestra, band and chamber groups but many pupils will engage with whole school wide ensembles such as Sinfonia, Chapel Choir and Jazz Band. The Lower School has a number of concerts throughout the year including the Summer Gala concert and performance as a whole first year choir at the Christmas Concert. Liaison with the drama department is very close with productions and musicals.



## PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY

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 philosophy, while developing key skills in thinking. Each year consists of three courses of roughly equal length.

In the First Year, your child will receive an introduction to Philosophy, looking at the nature of argument and Descartes' *cogito*. Next comes a study of Jesus, where we consider the age-old question of Jesus' identity and purpose. In the third term we study Buddha and Buddhism, considering its faith and practice, focusing particularly on the Middle Way as a path to enlightenment.

In the Second Year, your child will study ethics, and in particular the idea that society should be governed by the rule of the greatest good for the greatest number (utilitarianism). Next we consider Judaism and its beliefs and practices, with special consideration of the Holocaust and the role it plays in building the Jews as a people. Lastly, a study of Islam is used to act as a contrasting understanding of how religion builds community, with particular focus on the Hajj and the Umma.



# PRODUCT DESIGN & ENGINEERING

In the First Year, your child will have one Product Design and Engineering lesson each week. They'll gain confidence using a wide range of materials and manufacturing processes through hands-on projects in the workshop. They'll also begin to understand the design process by investigating existing products and exploring the responsibilities of a commercial designer.

In the Second Year, students build on these skills with more challenging projects. They will be introduced to digital design and manufacture and start to explore the application and opportunities that 3d printing offers them. They will dive deeper into the design process, researching problems, brainstorming ideas, and creating innovative solutions. They will be introduced to the role of a client and start to design products for a particular user group rather than simply themselves. Throughout their projects, they'll be encouraged to make smart design decisions while considering the environment and sustainability.



# SCIENCE

Lower School Science is taught separately as Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. Lessons take place in the fully equipped labs in our Science Centre where your child will learn key scientific skills through hands-on experiments.

**Biology:** Topics such as evolution, the heart, and food and diet are explored through experiments. Students use microscopes to learn about cells and carry out open-ended investigations, such as mapping taste sensors on the tongue. Students also look at the reproduction in animals and plants, linking with the PSHCE teaching in school.

**Chemistry:** Pupils will use equipment early on to carry out experiments and build confidence and safe practice in the laboratory. They will build a theoretical framework for understanding the nature of matter and chemical change. Topic areas covered include acids and bases, chemical reactions, the periodic table, particle theory and atomic structure.

**Physics:** In the First Year, Physics is taught separately, covering topics like light, space, sound, and heat. In the Second Year, Physics is combined with elements of electronics into a course called Engineering Science. This covers topics such as electricity, magnetism and forces, with a specific focus on practical skills and using electronics to construct systems.



# SPORT & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In the Lower School, your child will have one Sport lesson and one Physical Education lesson each week, plus additional sporting opportunities through The Other Half. Our goal is to inspire every student to enjoy their sporting journey at Abingdon, to develop a lifelong enthusiasm for physical activity, and to receive the necessary support and resources to excel.

There are 21 sports on offer at participation, performance and elite level, each delivered by a combination of specialist teachers, sports professionals and academic staff. There are plenty of opportunities to compete throughout the year, and Abingdon students see great success at county, national and international level.

The aim of the Physical Education curriculum is to inspire your child to be active, confident, and resilient, equipping them with the physical skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes needed for lifelong participation in sport and physical activity.

Pupils will develop a broad range of skills and knowledge across different areas of sport and physical activity. Throughout the year, they rotate through units including Exploring Physical Literacy, Swimming, and Invasion Game Principles, before moving on to Athletics and Striking and Fielding games in the summer term.

In Physical Literacy, we focus on developing coordination, balance, and movement skills through a variety of gymnastic based activities. Swimming lessons build water confidence, safety awareness, and basic stroke techniques. Invasion Game Principles introduce attacking and defending strategies, teamwork, and spatial awareness through different invasion games. During Athletics, students practise running, jumping, and throwing events, while Striking and Fielding games help develop hand-eye coordination, tactical thinking, and cooperative play. This varied programme supports the development of fundamental movement skills alongside key personal qualities such as resilience, determination, resourcefulness, and industriousness, while also fostering a lifelong enjoyment of physical activity.





ABINGDON