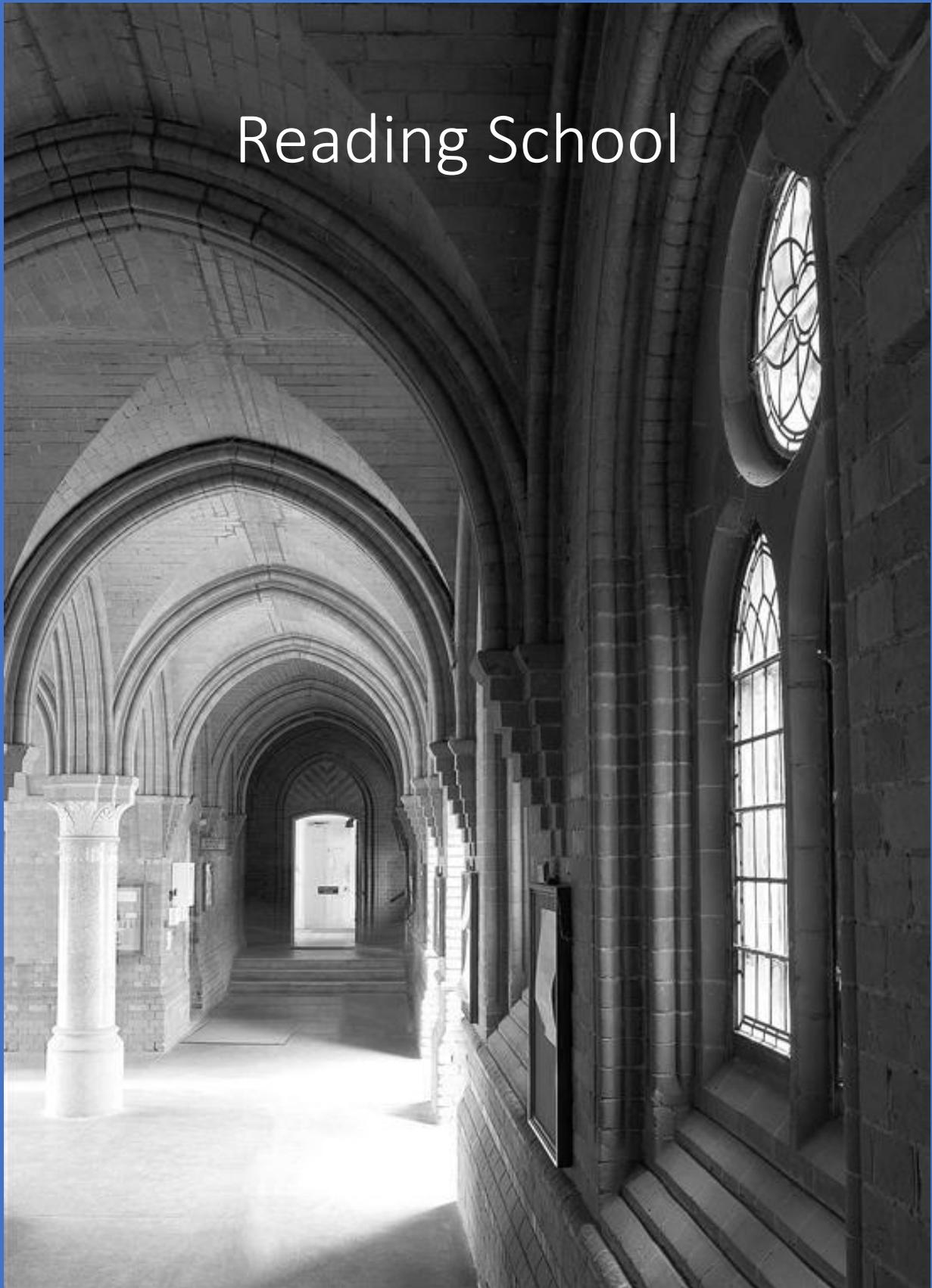


Reading School



The Reading Way Curriculum Statement 2020-2021

'The Reading Way': Curriculum Statement 2020-2021

Rationale

Reading School, a selective state day and boarding academy for boys aged 11-18, has been educating boys since 1125. Whilst making appropriate changes to timings and emphasis for this year, we believe that the way to overcome the challenges of COVID-19 is by remaining true to our dual aims of developing academic excellence and building good men. As a powerhouse of sustained high performance that champions character through our expertise and partnerships, we will continue to enrich the intellectual, sporting, artistic and cultural life of our students. We will maintain an exceptional environment where a lifelong love of learning is strengthened by the values of excellence, integrity, leadership, and community. These values are at the core of our approach to the curriculum, called "The Reading Way", one for which we are restless in the pursuit of improvement.

Intent

The Reading Way is appropriate to our students' needs and abilities. It intends to be broad enough to develop the character traits needed so that no child is left behind once beyond the school gates, yet deep enough to be unashamedly subject-oriented, whereby objectives are grounded in disciplinary appreciation beyond grades. Our synchronous and asynchronous curriculum model responds ambitiously and flexibly to the challenging circumstances to ensure that our students are well placed to overcome academic and pastoral hurdles.

Key Stage 3 (Years 7-8) is a foundation upon which 'Future Stories' of academic excellence are built. The broad base provides ample opportunity to develop the necessary skills and appetite for GCSEs whilst simultaneously giving the space for enrichment both within and outside of academic subjects. A strong sense of community is built within form groups, and a healthy sense of competition encourages excellence.

Key Stage 4 (Years 9-11) empowers students in making 4 of their own subject choices alongside a core curriculum to create a personalised programme that purposefully exceeds EBacc requirements. The resultant smaller group teaching enables teachers to give the individualised support necessary in a school where we recognise that there is no linear path or timescale to academic progress. Boys begin to take leadership roles within and beyond the House system, giving them the opportunity to demonstrate integrity and excellence within the pastoral community.

Key Stage 5 (Years 12-13) has a clear focus on scholarship. Through wider reading and vibrant intellectual discussion with subject specialists, a culture of aspiration means students are endowed with the power to rethink, challenge and create, leaving them best equipped for further education and employment. The continued SMSC and Games programme equips Reading School students, in particular those successfully elected to Senior Student Leadership Roles, with the knowledge and skills they need to become active, responsible and engaged men.

Implementation

Synchronous teaching ensures core content is covered face-to-face with expert subject teachers, purposeful asynchronous activities ensure pastoral, academic and emotional needs are met while a concurrent 'Digital First' approach to teaching & learning under the leadership of our Director of Digital Learning ensures that students and staff are well placed to ensure a seamless and high quality transition to any future period of remote learning.

The Director of Teaching & Learning drives the implementation of a set of 8 core teaching practices that are sufficiently ubiquitous to ensure consistency across the breadth of the curriculum, whilst adaptable enough to reflect each subject specialism. Against a background of societal uncertainty, we are clear that an effectively designed curriculum can be a source of confidence for our students.

We prioritise core content, sequence it logically and design assessments that inform teachers' next steps and provide feedback that moves students on.

Subject-specialist Heads of Departments have responsibility for making explicit their 'subject standard' in these 8 practices. They work with link governors, link senior leaders and welcome student feedback to reflect the dialogical nature of a curriculum that teaches beyond the test. Teaching staff are the undoubted experts in the classroom, yet are not complacent about their knowledge. Regardless of career stage, they are supported to have a critical understanding of pedagogical developments in their discipline. Senior Leaders review and quality-assure the curriculum alongside teaching staff in order to ensure excellent implementation, share best practice and ask pertinent questions. They help to develop curriculum expertise across the school through proactive professional development and partnership opportunities. With the support of the curriculum manager, they provide a staffed timetable where student choice is the main determinant, and breadth the main aim.

Pastoral care has never been so important, and at Reading School, it takes many forms. The House system ensures Heads of House are the experts on students under their care, following their progress throughout their time at the school. Form Tutors build positive relationships with students and parents alike, following their class up the school. Where required, staff are able to direct students to qualified care from our in-house Student Support team, as well as external Clinical Psychologist and Counsellor.

Key Stage 3 goes far beyond the National Curriculum requirements. Students study 3 separate sciences (Chemistry, Physics, Biology) plus Computer Science, every student studies a foreign language (French, German, Spanish or Latin), along with separate Humanities (Geography, History, Religious Studies), a range of Arts (Art, Music and Drama), as well as substantial quantities of English and Mathematics. Further evidence of the breadth of our curriculum is the recent addition of a Mandarin Excellence Programme for Year 7, taught by a native speaker. Assessment of progress at KS3 is supportive and forward-thinking so as to best prepare students for the challenges ahead. In addition to our reporting being based on evidence of Commitment, Perseverance and Resilience, 'Building Good Men' is explicitly emphasised through non-examined yet timetabled programmes, such as fortnightly PSHE sessions and weekly Floreat activities that include exposing students to the Design-Make-Evaluate principles of Design & Technology which encourages students to take risks and be resourceful, innovative, enterprising and capable citizens that are aware of and account for the needs of others. The regular and Games sessions emphasise Essential Movement rather than talent alone. Year 7 students are taught in form groups according to their House, so that positive relationships and a sense of community can be fostered, before Maths and English are set in Year 8 so that adequate stretch and support can be implemented.

Key Stage 4 goes far beyond the EBacc requirements. On top of English Language, English Literature, Mathematics and the option to take Additional Maths, all students are fortunate to continue studying a foreign language (French, German, Spanish or Latin). They retain all 3 separate sciences (Physics, Biology, Chemistry) whilst choosing 4 subjects from Geography, History, Ancient History, Computer Science, Art, Electronics, Music, Drama and PE (one of which must be a Humanity). Economics is available from Year 9 so that students can apply their groundings in Maths and the Humanities to a new context. Philosophy and Religious Studies are also offered. As choices are made, we seek to maintain breadth through the offer of a Higher Project Qualification, which enables students to explore the independent learning process and develop confidence in core life and study skills. Class sizes vary between 20 and 30, with assessment in KS4 stretching students beyond the final exams, directing them on how to develop genuine disciplinary understanding rather than simply teaching to the test. Outside the examined curriculum, 'Building Good Men' is delivered as all students participate in fortnightly PSHE sessions that encompass Relationships and Sex Education, whilst remaining on the Floreat programme until the end of Year 10.

Key Stage 5 studies are academically demanding and intellectually stimulating. In offering all 2 year linear A-Levels, students have the time and space to develop the in-depth mastery for success beyond the school. Our ethos at Reading School encourages students to stretch the boundaries of their understanding through independent study, discussion, team work, active research, inspirational lectures and advanced extra-curricular study groups. Barring exceptional circumstances, all subjects from KS4 continue to A-Level, and the addition of Further Maths and the Extended Project qualification enable students to stand out from the crowd. Most students study a minimum of 3 A-Levels, whilst those aiming for early entry courses at University may choose 4. All choices are made in light of extensive advice, conversations and after meeting minimum eligibility criteria, with Careers support continuing throughout Sixth Form with our Careers Advisor. We further emphasise character as Year 12 students participate in weekly PSHE and Games sessions, as well as often running academic mentoring for their peers, whilst those involved in the Future Stories programme give up their time to teach local primary school pupils in a socially distanced manner. Although assessment acknowledges exam needs, we expect teaching and learning in Reading School to go far beyond the level of the public examinations and to expose our students to questions more commonly experienced at University, an ambition demonstrated through our success in international academic competitions.

Our Asynchronous Activities afternoon programme gives a menu of supra-curricular, skill based, sporting, spiritual and socially focused opportunities to each and every single student in the school. This is a COVID-secure method to deliver the exceptional out-of-classroom learning previously delivered through over 100 annual educational visits. We remain primed to seize every opportunity to safely offer students Work Experience, independent study leave and Combined Cadet Force activities. The Reading School Promise ensures that finance is never an impediment to extra-curricular participation.

Impact

We believe that our impact can best be measured by the quality of the young men who leave the school. Our thriving alumni network, the contribution that our school makes to the local community and regular regional/national/international sporting success are evidence of the ideal balance between Academic Excellence and Building Good Men. Our staff are passionate about their continuous professional development and determined to ensure that no child is left behind. Rather than exam results, our proudest statistic are the fact that the Learning Resource Centre consistently loans out over 12,000 books a year to our students. Furthermore, outstanding academic outcomes as measured by South East Region State Secondary School of the Year 2020 Award and Oxbridge /Russell Group places are a natural, desirable conclusion of our subject-specialist curriculum offer that is shaped by the needs and demands of our constituency.