



Thomas Tallis Curriculum 2019-20

INTENT

At Tallis we believe in [Education to understand the world and change it for the better.](#)

Therefore, our curriculum is rooted in our belief in **powerful knowledge**. In the teeth of structural change we remember our role as society's educators and guardians of the young, offering powerful and shared knowledge to the nation's children. That knowledge comes from centuries of learning and from the universities and subject associations. It is powerful because it enables children to interpret and control the world: it is shared because all our children should be exposed to it. It is fair and just that this should be so. It is unfair and unjust when children are offered poor quality knowledge which fails to broaden their experience.

We formulate this in 10 principles.

- 1. Knowledge is worthwhile in itself.**
We tell children this unapologetically: it's what childhood and adolescence is for
- 2. Schools teach shared and powerful knowledge on behalf of society**
We teach what they need to make sense of and improve the world
- 3. Shared and powerful knowledge is verified through learned communities**
We should be model learners ourselves, in touch with research and subject associations
- 4. Children need powerful knowledge to understand and interpret the world**
Without it they remain dependent upon those who have it or misuse it
- 5. Powerful knowledge is cognitively superior to that needed for daily life**
It transcends and liberates children from their daily experience
- 6. Shared and powerful knowledge enables children to grow into useful citizens**
As adults they can understand, cooperate and shape the world together
- 7. Shared knowledge is a foundation for a just and sustainable democracy**
Citizens educated together share an understanding of the common good
- 8. It is fair and just that all children should have access to this knowledge**
Powerful knowledge opens doors: it must be available to all children
- 9. Accepted adult authority is required for shared knowledge sharing**
The teacher's authority to teach is given and valued by society
- 10. Pedagogy links adult authority, powerful knowledge and its transmission**
High quality professional skills enable children to make a relationship with ideas to change the world.

Examination results follow doing this right. There are no shortcuts.

In order to achieve this, our School Plan is built on three foundations: curriculum, inclusion and community. We shape our curriculum in accordance with the following principles:

CURRICULUM: what we do

Thomas Tallis is a creative comprehensive school committed to a broad and balanced entitlement curriculum. Evidence informed, we aim to use consistently excellent teaching, data, and CPD to build quality, fairness and success for our young people for the long term. Literacy and numeracy across the curriculum enhance progress for everyone. Research focuses our thinking and improves our teaching and learning. We scrutinise our achievements and seek to improve them for all of our children. Our Habits of persistence, discipline, imagination, inquisitiveness and collaboration permeate everything we do. All our achievement and curriculum plans are based on this.

So our curriculum has the following characteristics

It is ethically driven so

- inclusive not exclusive in approach
- offers subject choices that go beyond the performance table measures
- Includes the development of Tallis habits and character
- has creativity at its core
- is primarily designed to benefit the learner, not school performance

It has knowledge at its core so

- teachers are expert subject specialists
- programmes of study focus on developing powerful knowledge
- subjects have a 'signature pedagogy' which helps students learn particular knowledge
- we aim for real learning rather than exam tips and tricks
- 'threshold concepts' or big ideas are interleaved throughout the programmes

It is creative so

- students are expected to make the learning their own
- students are deliberately given a broader curriculum than required
- the curriculum and co-curriculum support deep personal engagement
- the co-curriculum is extensive, providing cultural and personal creative capital
- opportunities for real world experiences are sought

It is rigorous and challenging so

- subject areas design their curriculum to encourage students to *think hard*
- it builds real understanding in both knowledge and skills
- it provides the skills, understanding and qualifications for progression
- complex ideas are relevant and made available for all.
- students are encouraged to make connections within and across subjects

WHAT DO WE OFFER?

Key Stage 3

Our Key Stage Three is years 7 and 8. The full National Curriculum is taught:

- ✓ English
- ✓ Maths
- ✓ Science
- ✓ History
- ✓ Geography
- ✓ French
- ✓ Spanish

- ✓ Design and Technology
- ✓ Art
- ✓ Music
- ✓ Dance
- ✓ Drama
- ✓ Computing
- ✓ PE
- ✓ RE
- ✓ Personal, social, health and careers education (PSHCE)

Key Stage 4

Our Key Stage Four is three years at Thomas Tallis, years 9, 10 and 11. We do this so that students have the time and space to learn, absorb and internalise more complex ideas and concepts. Year 9 is treated as a Foundation year where students are prepared for GCSE study; students are not assessed according to GCSE criteria, and programmes of study are not limited to the GCSE exam syllabi.

We have a large range of subjects at KS4:

GCSE: Art, Business Studies, Computer Science, Dance, Design Technology (Food Technology, Graphics or Product Design) Drama, English Language, English Literature, Film Studies, French, Geography, History, Mathematics, Music, Photography, Religious Studies, Science (Triple Biology, Chemistry and Physics and Combined Science), Spanish

Level 2 BTEC (*equivalent to 1 GCSE*): Design Engineer Construct (DEC), Health & Social Care, Media, Music, Sport

Level 2: British Sign Language

Additionally by invitation or agreement only GCSE Astronomy, GCSE Heritage Languages, BTEC Enterprise, VCERT Health & Fitness

To guarantee breadth of curriculum we require all students to choose either history or geography or a language at KS4. While we strongly recommend that more able students should continue with both, we do not force this. This decision is supported by governors and parents. Any student may, of course, take all of them.

Statutory RE and computing in KS4 are delivered across the curriculum and through PSHCE.

- Computing is covered in maths, science and a focused ('drop-down') day.
- RE takes place through History, English, PSHCE and through a drop-down day. There is an ASDAN qualification for all.

Key Stage 5

At KS5 we offer

A level: Art, Biology, Business Studies, Chemistry, Computer Science, Dance, Drama, Economics, English Language, English Literature, Film Studies, French, Geography, Government and Politics, Graphics, History, Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Photography, Physics, Religious Studies, Sociology, Spanish

Level 3 BTEC (*equivalent to 2 or 3 A Levels*): Art & Design, Business, Health & Social Care, ICT, Media, Music Technology, Sport

AS: EPQ,

Students entering Tallis post-16 without GCSE grade 4 English or mathematics are required to retake.

Curriculum design

The three cornerstones of our curriculum at Tallis are: Habits of Mind, Powerful Knowledge and Threshold Concepts.

Habits of mind

For a number of years, we have been involved in research about the value of creative learning. Out of this research a set of Habits of Mind has emerged that appear to be associated with successful creative learners.¹

We are committed to helping all of our students develop these Habits of Mind as part of their everyday learning experience. Teachers embed the habits in lessons and schemes of work. We research the impact of habits focused learning and share our learning with each other and the students.

Powerful knowledge

The Tallis curriculum synthesises 'traditional' (knowledge as given) and 'progressive' (knowledge as a social construct) pedagogies, treating subjects as the most reliable tools we have to help students acquire powerful knowledge and make sense of the world, as explained at the start of this paper. An overarching Programme of Study organises the powerful knowledge we want our students to learn. The development of each programme of study is an inherently creative process: the process by which we take the desired outcomes from the curriculum and convert them into engaging activities in our classrooms. In so doing, each subject area has also defined their signature pedagogy – the core values that underpin the kind of teaching that will lead to the desired learning within that subject discipline.

Threshold concepts

Our programmes of study chart the conceptual ('knowing that'), content ('knowing what') and procedural ('knowing how') knowledge entailed by each subject discipline. Threshold Concepts are the big ideas that we believe help students develop a deeper understanding of a subject; they are not meant to be instantly understood. Once opened, they introduce students to troublesome knowledge - a new way of seeing the subject they are studying.

A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something

- Jan Meyer and Ray Land

Threshold concepts are:

- **Transformative:** Once understood, they change the way students see the subject and themselves.
- **Irreversible:** They are difficult to unlearn.
- **Integrative:** Once learned, they are likely to bring together different parts of the subject which students hadn't previously seen as connected.
- **Bounded:** Clearly defined in relation to other concepts
- **Troublesome:** They are likely to present students with a degree of difficulty and may sometimes seem incoherent or counter-intuitive.
- **Discursive:** The student's ability to use the language associated with that subject changes as they change.²

In short, Threshold Concepts are what we as teachers agree are the big ideas in our various disciplines. They help our students to make sense of their journey through school. They are a way of making explicit to students the foundational ideas in our subjects, thereby helping them to reach mastery. Threshold concepts, when combined with the content of the curriculum (the 'knowing what'), provide students with the conceptual and propositional knowledge they need.



¹ The Tallis Habits are based on Bill Lucas, Ellen Spencer, and Guy Claxton (2013) 'Progression in Student Creativity in School: First steps towards new forms of formative assessment' OECD Education Working Papers No 86. Paris: OECD Publishing.

² Meyer, J.H.F. and Land, R. (2003) 'Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: linkages to ways of thinking and practising', in: Rust, C. (ed.), Improving Student Learning - Theory and Practice Ten Years On. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD), pp 412-424.

Finally, we also plan for students to 'know how' to apply this knowledge appropriately. This procedural knowledge develops disciplinary habits of mind - ways of thinking that are developed through sustained engagement with the subject. These sound disciplinary foundations ultimately develop students' interdisciplinary habits of mind.

Curriculum monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring of the curriculum, and the delivery of the curriculum, takes place through a number of linked approaches.

- Programmes of study and schemes of learning
- Regular personal line lead meetings (every 1, 2 or 3 weeks according to need)
- Departmental self evaluation
- Lesson observations, learning walks and evaluation of student work
- Outcomes (internal data and external examination)
- Student and parent evaluations
- Regular curriculum reviews for and visits by governors
- Local Authority monitoring visits

Curriculum Development

Curriculum development takes place through 5 main routes:

- Curriculum area meetings (x6 per year)
- InSeT days (3 per year on curriculum and subject development)
- 6 dedicated development afternoons per year for subject development in curriculum areas
- Research & Development- all staff are required to do this as part of their continuing professional development.
- External CPD
- Middle leader development - many of our staff are on development courses with recognised organisations such as the PTI

Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE)

PSHCE takes place in a designated hour every fortnight, with some additional time in community days, assemblies and tutor time. Activities are mapped across each year group covering our statutory responsibilities and beyond. We cover British values, laws, citizenship, drugs awareness, social enterprise, sex education, body image, Tallis character, stress management, personal safety and revision methods.

Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG)

CIAG has 3 main routes across the curriculum.

- special events such as community days, assemblies, option evenings, parent evenings and careers fairs
- Through PSHCE: sessions on apprenticeships, options, applications, CV writing etc.
- Our commissioned independent careers service *Prospects* for group and individual interviews.

Tallis CIAG is organised under the following themes:

- Year 7: Inspire
- Year 8: Inform
- Year 9: Explore
- Year 10: Plan
- Year 11: Decide

The Co-curriculum

Most learning takes place through curriculum time in the school day. Tallis also has an extensive co-curriculum of trips, events, activities and awards that supplement and go beyond taught lessons. These range from specific organised awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh's and the Arts Awards, to visiting workshops, being an associate of the Tate gallery, to sports, robotics or astronomy club. We make every effort to make these activities affordable and accessible to all, although we may sometimes have to ask for a voluntary contribution for activities that go beyond the curriculum.