

St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy

Sixth form Programme of Study

This Programme of Study provides non-statutory guidance regarding 16-19 education at St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy. It is a recognised expectation that all students who are funded through the 16-19 funding methodology must be enrolled on such a study programme and that this will ordinarily combine substantial qualifications (the “core aim”) with other complementary enrichment activities all of which are tailored to each student’s prior attainment and career goals.

The document is designed to ensure that:

- All students have the opportunity to explore and develop their faith within our Lasallian community and to fulfil their God given talents.
- All students understand how and why excellence should become a habit and in doing so all achieve their academic and personal potential so they are fully prepared to access the next stage of their lives.
- All students develop the confidence and competencies to positively impact on their surrounding environments.
- All students are offered a breadth and depth of experience that does not limit their options for future study or work. This breadth and depth will be tailored to the needs of the individual but will typically combine the study of substantial qualifications, work experience to give students the opportunity to develop their career choices and to apply their skills in real working conditions and other complementary enrichment activity to develop their broader skills, attitudes, confidence and overall character. Where appropriate, the experience will include the opportunity to study English and mathematics where students have not yet achieved a GCSE grade 4.ⁱ
- All students are provided with a structured and challenging learning programme that supports and contributes to their academic and personal development and progression.
- All students understand the expectations attached to their Post-16 learning programme and can therefore be held accountable for their performance.
- All students develop a wider set of transferrable skills which include communication, leadership, resilience and determination.
- All students are guided and advised appropriately regarding their studies and the route to the next step in their Post-16 educational journey.

Academic Study

Every study programme has a core aim which is classed as the principal activity, substantial qualifications or core purpose of a student’s programme and is the component that has the largest number of planned (taught and delivered) hours. The programmes of study are designed to be full-time and have a minimum of 540 planned hours per academic year which allows for sufficient time to deliver the principles outlined above.

It is expected that the core aim is agreed between the student and the school and it will remain unchanged during the year although exceptions may be made where, for example, the student finds they have made the wrong programme choice and transfers to an alternative programme.

The remainder of the study programme should complement the core aim.

At St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy, students are offered a range of subjects - mainly academic with some vocational - across the three Trinity partner schools and it is the study of these subjects that constitutes the “core aim”.

Academic subjects range from traditional facilitating subjects to more specialist areas. To access the full course offer, please refer to our Academy website: <https://stmargaretward.co.uk/sixth-form/>

For the academic year 2025-26, the offer is outlined in the table below:

Trinity Sixth Form 2025-26		
Core Aim subjects		Complementary/Enrichment activity
A Levels	Vocational	
Art	Applied Science	Charity fund-raising
Biology	Business Studies (single or double)	Core Maths
		Clubs (Eco/Book etc)
Business Studies	Creative Art	Core RE
Chemistry	Digital Media	Debate
Computing	Health and Social Care (AAQ, double or triple)	English or Maths GCSE resit
Classics	Law	English Speaking Board
Drama	Performing Arts (Music)	Extended Project Qualification
		Guest speakers – Speakers 4 Schools
Economics	Soccer School	HE+ with Cambridge University
English Language		Independent Learning Programme, including appraisal process, UCAS guidance
English Literature		Law online internships
French		Leadership opportunities
Further Maths		Literacy Champions
Geography		Mentoring – academic Mentoring – pastoral
German		MOOCs
Government and Politics		National Citizen Service
History		Sixth Form Newsletter
		Summer schools
Mathematics		Unifrog – careers guidance
Music		University visits
Philosophy and Ethics		Visiting university lecturers
Physics		Volunteering
Physical education		Whole year group event organisation
Product Design		Work experience/placements
Psychology		
Sociology		

The Trinity Sixth Form also offers core mathematics as well as A Level Mathematics and Further Mathematics with a view to more students participating in a Post-16 Mathematics qualification. This decision follows research that evidences how higher levels of achievement in Mathematics are associated with higher earnings for individuals and many employers who are looking for applicants with advanced mathematical and quantitative skills.

Advice and Information Guidance

Prior to entry to the sixth form, students are given an interview with one of the sixth form team. Staff examine current data, targets and projected grades to ensure students are choosing to follow the best pathway. A discussion about future career aspirations is also crucial to this process and advice is given regarding, for example, subjects required / grades required / recommended work experience to be able to access the next stage of education or employment.

The careers service is also involved in separate interviews. Discussion between careers staff and the Head of Sixth Form is regular.

Throughout their studies, all students receive regular feedback on their progress compared with their personal targets and this feedback is also sent to their home for the information of parents/carers. There are also formal parents' evenings held during the year.

Academic monitoring mainly takes place through the appraisal system (see below for further details).

On results day and beyond, staff with experience are on hand to give guidance and support regarding Clearing, alternative courses etc. and we are committed to providing support once a student has officially left the sixth form in terms of providing references, offering work experience placements etc.

Complementary Enrichment Activity

At entry in Year 12 all students must commit to the **complementary enrichment programme**. This takes a number of guises but crucially is designed to enhance a student's faith and personal development and independence to further support and develop their curriculum offer and help with applications to future courses and employment by developing essential transferable skills, including:

- Resilience.
- Decision Making.
- Analytical skills.
- Inter personal skills.
- Presentation skills.
- Evaluative and reflective skills.

All students commit to gaining relevant **work experience** especially for those wishing to pursue careers in health and social care or education. However, other students are expected to seek employment experiences relevant to their career aspirations. The last week of the summer term is designated for this purpose, though students can opt to gain additional experience throughout the

year. Our aim is to give our young people the opportunity to develop career choices, get a first taste of work and develop critical soft employability skills needed for real working conditions

Work experience may also include: work tasters, running a student enterprise, participation in social action, volunteering or a work placement taken with an external employer.

Some courses will require **work placements** with an external employer. These placements can be an integral part of some students' qualification hours and will be undertaken in a workplace that is relevant to their course to build on their employability skills in a practical setting. Work placements can also form a part of the student's non-qualification hours and can be related to the course they are studying and/or help them gain experience to progress onto their chosen career path. At all times, work experience and work placements should be:

- purposeful.
- offer challenge.
- be relevant to the young person's study programme and career aspirations.
- allow the student to apply the technical and practical skills learned in the classroom.
- be managed under the direction of a supervisor to ensure the young person obtains a genuine learning experience suited to their needs.
- is based on a structured plan for the duration of the placement which provides tangible outcomes for the student and the employer.
- has clear roles, responsibilities and expectations for all concerned and is followed by some form of reference or feedback from the employer based on the young person's performance.

No matter what the duration and arrangements are, the school will agree with both the student and the employer:

- the education and training goals of the placement.
- the reasonable expectations on student conduct.
- the role of the employer in providing supervision and training.

Further information re. work experience, work placements, the National Minimum Wage, Health & Safety, Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance and Disclosure and Barring Service can be found in GOV.UK: 16-19 study programme: guidance (2019-20)

Core RE forms a compulsory part of each student's Post-16 curriculum. Our bespoke two-year course helps and guides students in their faith journey whilst also encourages them to consider, evaluate and analyse contemporary philosophical topics that have a direct impact on the world around us.

As part of the school's Lasallian identity, students are expected to take part in organising and participating in **charity based activities**. Such social action helps our young people to take practical action in the service of and for others and in doing so helps to create a positive change. As well as such action helping our students to be the best versions of themselves that they can be, evidence shows that young people who participate in social action show robust improvements in the skills and behaviours that employers are calling for. These include resilience, problem solving and having a sense

of community in addition to having stronger personal networks, higher life satisfaction and reduced anxiety.

The **LWDP (Lasallian World Development Project)** and the **annual LOURDES pilgrimage** are both excellent opportunities to put personal faith and commitment to others in to practice whilst being a student in the sixth form at St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy.

The school believes in preparing students for future employment as well as monitoring their progress and encouraging personal responsibility. We therefore have adopted an **Appraisal system** as part of the Independent Learning Programme. This system ensures:

- all students have an Appraiser with whom they meet approximately every half term.
- all students are held accountable for their performance.
- action plans are put into place as appropriate.
- students are encouraged to be reflective and evaluate their performance.
- parents/carers are notified of any concerns.

Part of the appraisal process is to introduce UCAS and help guide students both through the logistics of applying and thinking through course and university choices. There is a UCAS support evening and Finance talk every year for parents/carers. A wide network of alumni is also available to offer support and information about universities and courses which has proved to be very useful. All students have a supervised day in the summer of Year 12 to start their applications which is supported by past students who come into school to offer first hand guidance. Appraisers and subject teachers give ongoing support with personal statements and students are encouraged to send applications early. Students who are slow to apply are identified at the end of November and the team interviews to discuss any concerns / barriers to applying and offer ongoing support. Students not wishing to apply to university are identified and an interview is arranged with careers staff in order to look at other options. Support is given regarding applications.

Every year educational visits are organised, dependent upon calendar clashes, to a variety of universities to introduce students to university life. The aim is for students to gain experience of a Russell group university, a local university and a newer university. Such visits are in addition to subject specific educational visits that are arranged by subject tutors.

The Sutton Trust Summer School programme is fully utilised. We also encourage students to apply for the American Sutton Trust programme at Yale, Harvard etc, if appropriate. Other students are encouraged to apply to attend summer schools at local universities e.g. North Staffs which has been particularly effective in overcoming the barriers some students experience which can prevent them from accessing Higher Education.

Links with the admissions teams from both Oxford and Cambridge University have been strengthened with the school participating in Higher Education+ with Cambridge University. The Sixth Form has maintained strong links with former students who have studied or are studying at Oxbridge and they offer additional support and guidance.

Close links with the Heads of Year for Year 10 and Year 11 to identify potential Oxbridge students are incorporated into annual planning.

We also require all students to participate in the **English Speaking Board L3, Grade 6 Qualification** in which students must prepare for and deliver three presentations in front of their peers and be

externally examined. The students are required to prepare three presentations: a review of a film / tv programme, a critical examination of a text, including reading a short excerpt and a presentation about one form of technology. Students are assessed on the clarity of their communication, presenting skills, their ability to answer questions and their participation as part of an audience, including listening and questioning skills. We have an excellent track record with all students who have been entered having passed the exam, many of them achieving the highest grades. Students overwhelmingly say how valuable the experience of ESB has been and how well it has helped them to prepare for interviews, university and their future careers.

Students who seek the additional challenge can prepare for and sit the Grade 8 ESB in Year 13.

The opportunity to gain the **Extended Project Qualification** is available to all Post – 16 students in our sixth form. This provides a student with the opportunity to develop their research, organisational and communication skills by investigating a topic of personal interest and producing both a written dissertation and delivering a presentation to a wider audience. Completion of the EPQ is excellent preparation for Higher Education.

Peer mentoring is a popular aspect of our complementary enrichment offer whereby Heads of Department / Heads of Year are able to approach the Sixth Form team to request mentor support for younger students. Sixth formers are then matched with the younger student and a timetable of support is agreed. All student mentors undertake basic safeguarding training from the DSL. Staff are available to offer support and guidance. This increases student independence and confidence, supports the Lasallian nature of our school and provides valuable experience for many careers.

Summary

All students are full time and take the equivalent of three Level 3 qualifications. This may be three A levels or a triple L3 BTEC or a combination of A levels and BTEC.

Each qualification receives five hours per week of taught lesson time.

In addition, all students engage in an enrichment programme with both compulsory and optional components.

Compulsory:

- Core RE – 1 hour per week.
- English Speaking Board Level 6 (externally examined).
- SMW Independent Learning Programme.
- Work experience (minimum one week, though many opt to gain regular work experience/placement).
- Trips - subject specific /cross-curricular/whole year group.
- School leadership.
- Involvement in charitable events.

Optional

- Extended Project Level 3 Qualification – 1 hour per week
- Additional work experience.

- Peer mentoring.
- Cambridge University HE+ (with other local Sixth Forms).
- Running / assisting with clubs and revision sessions (Years 7-11).
- Talks e.g. Speakers for schools / careers talks / subject talks.
- Lasallian World Development Project.
- Lourdes Pilgrimage.
- Clubs
- Newsletter
- English Speaking board Level 8 (yr13)

ⁱ N.B. All students aged 16-19 studying 150 hours or more and who do not hold at least GCSE grade 4 are required to study English and maths as part of their study programme as securing these basic skills will support a student to secure a job, an apprenticeship or go on to Further Education. All full-time 16-19 year old students starting a new study programme with a GCSE grade 3 in English and/or maths must continue to study towards a GCSE. Should there be any student with prior attainment of GCSE grade 2 or below, such a student should be able to study towards Level 2 Functional Skills or GCSE grade 9 – 4. The school provides flexibility in the study programme so that each student is enabled to improve in English and maths to the best of their ability and study an appropriate qualification. As a school, we determine how best to teach English and maths to the relevant students and the extent to which teaching and learning are embedded and /or reinforced as well as the appropriate course duration and when to enter for exams.