

What about September?

At the moment no-one knows what September and the return to school will look like. But we do know for sure that most of our students (Y7-9) will have no time in school with their teachers before September and that our oldest students, our Y10s and Y12s, will have limited face to face support.

With that in mind, our subject leaders and teachers have turned their attention to the curriculum. They are reviewing what has been covered by home-learning so far, what can be covered in this final half term and what alterations need to be made to the curriculum for the next academic year so that students can learn essential content and develop key skills.

We are also aware that home-learning is far from ideal. Some students are thoroughly engaged and some are struggling. Our teachers had virtually no time to prepare for lockdown. They were trained to teach in classrooms, laboratories, sports fields and workshops but not via a computer and that is what they love to do. The change to delivering our HSS curriculum via home-learning has been a challenge. We have done our best and keep trying to improve further but there will be some gaps in knowledge and skills for many of our students and that has to factor into our September preparations too.

In this blog, some of our subject leaders describe the work they are currently undertaking to alter and adapt their curriculum for the rest of this academic year and their plans for the next academic year to address where we find ourselves in these strange times.

English

During the period of lockdown, teachers in English have worked hard to facilitate effective remote learning by carefully planning a range of activities and adapting the delivery of these to suit the needs of particular classes and individual students. We are working hard to ensure that students continue to develop the skills and knowledge they need to make good progress on their five- or seven-year journey in English at High Storrs.

As a department we have had to make some changes to the content of lessons and series of lessons to ensure that they are as accessible and effective as possible. Studying a contemporary short story, for example, might be a better fit for learning at home without a teacher and other students in the room than a Shakespeare play, while still enabling students to develop the same skills of analysis and appreciation of language.

For Key Stage Three students, we have planned the content of lessons centrally as a department, with individual teachers producing small units for all classes to use. This has ensured consistency in our offer to students and has allowed teachers more time to focus on adapting the delivery of the material to best meet the needs of their students. For GCSE groups who will sit exams in English Literature in 2021, we have focused on revision of the texts covered over the last year rather than introducing new set texts, acknowledging the fact that the latter will work best when teachers are able to interact with students in the classroom, assessing their understanding and progress and guiding them through the learning journey. We are confident that the time spent on revision has consolidated understanding and will stand students in excellent stead next year.

As the lockdown has been extended and it has become clear that some groups will not see their teachers in the classroom before September the focus of planning for all groups has widened from keeping learning ticking over to ensuring we have inculcated the skills and knowledge students need to provide an effective foundation for next academic year. For Year 9 this has meant series of lessons looking at the context and some of the themes they will need to understand when studying *Macbeth* and the Victorian novel in Year 10. For slightly younger students we have planned carefully how to introduce more challenging topics to get Y7 ready for Y8 and Y8 for Y9, while giving students the help and support they would normally receive in the classroom and making clear links to prior learning. In terms of next year's Y7 we are lucky to have two teachers in the department with Primary experience, and they have liaised with our Key Stage 3 co-ordinator on how to make the beginning of next year feel like more of a transition period to reassure and support new students, while at the same time maintaining the challenge and rigour of the new topic-based Year 7 curriculum we were already planning.

Sixth Form students have found learning in lockdown a challenge given the importance of expert teacher input for the challenging A Level English courses. However, remote lessons have been an opportunity to engage with wider reading and deepen understanding of key topics, whether the conventions of the crime genre for our Literature students or the relationship between language and technology for our linguists. Students have also been carrying out research and preparation towards NEA, though the actual drafting of these will begin when students are back in school and teachers can provide expert guidance at close quarters. Some tweaks will be made to next year's Y13 curriculum to make up for any gaps resulting from lost classroom time, with targeted assessments used to check that students' subject knowledge and understanding is every bit as strong as it needs to be and as it would be in any other year.

Mr Caldwell

Maths

Maths teachers have employed a really varied approach to on-line learning. There have been lessons from a range of on-line platforms like Mathswatch, Corbett Maths, Eedi and BBC bitesize that include lots of modelling and practice questions. Some teachers have been posting videos of themselves teaching or modelling with voice-overs and some have launched their own YouTube channels. All this as well as, of course, some tasks set from the good old-fashioned text book! In all cases Maths teachers have been able to keep track of student engagement and there has nearly always been a way for students to know how they are doing either through self-checking against provided solutions, immediate feedback from quizzes and other on-line tools or direct teacher feedback on work that has been submitted. Teachers have also always been available on email or through SMHW messaging to respond to individual queries, and lots of encouragement and advice has also been shared in this way.

Because of all the fantastic interactive resources available to maths teachers, we have been able to stick quite closely to our existing curriculum plans, including delivering some new content. Many students are gaining in confidence and teachers continue to build in retrieval practice and consolidation of the skills covered throughout the year.

There have, however, been a few topics that we have made the decision to leave until we are back at school. We've been working on re-shaping our curriculum plans in all years to move those topics, that require using specialised mathematical equipment or which are particularly conceptually challenging, to next year. We are now in the process of re-shaping the content for next year so that we can include these topics as well as build in time for review of the most critical content that students have needed to access independently at home.

Maths is a subject that utilises a 'spiral curriculum' where we re-visit the same topic area building increasing levels of complexity and challenge each time. When we teach an area of the Maths curriculum, the foundations are re-visited each time we meet it before building up to new content. Part of our re-shaping of next year's curriculum plans, will involve creating a bit of space to unpick any issues we find when we re-visit ideas that students previously encountered on their own at home.

For the rest of the summer term, KS3 and KS4 students will benefit from more on-line materials, especially some new ones developed by White Rose Maths in addition to all the on-line learning platforms and resources we've already been using.

Y12 A Level Maths students will continue to consolidate this year's course whilst Y12 Further Maths students have completed the content of the A Level course and will be guided by their teachers to begin the Further Maths course. All the Year 12 students will have an assessment which will prompt them to review the years' work and enable teachers to identify any weaknesses due to home learning (or other factors!) and provide feedback, ready to focus on making a great start into Y13.

Mrs Wright

Geography

Over the past few years, we have spent a lot of time thinking about our students' curriculum *journey* in Geography (no pun intended). This involves developing skills and knowledge from the moment a Y7 High Storrs Student walks through

the door, to their final lesson (whether that be at the end of Y8, Y9, Y11 or Y13!). The shutting of schools has been a 'bump in the road' but the department have continued to teach lessons, create worksheets, find interactive resources and developed projects that keep our students on this journey (throughout Y7 and Y8).

We have also:

- Asked our Y9's to work their way through a GCSE topic (which allows them to revisit volcanoes from Y8 and come face to face with earthquakes and hurricanes). We intend to re-cap this and have the time to do so in Y10 and Y11 for those going on to study GCSE.
- Switched the topics around in Y10 to ensure that we are covering content for Paper 1 (Coasts) and Paper 2 (Human Geography- UK cities- Sheffield) instead of working on our fieldwork requirements this term. We had planned a sunny trip to the sea side to conduct our Physical Fieldwork this June. At the moment, we are unsure of how the exam board will adapt to ensure fieldwork can be completed safely in the future. It may be that we consider the idea of virtual fieldwork instead for this cohort as they head into Y11. Miss Baker has created topic checklists to allow students to review their own learning and do self assessment of their class work since school closed. These will be rolled out to all groups – with an end of year assessment (of some kind) planned before the school year is over.
- Asked our Y12's to start their NEA's (coursework). Whilst this is supposed to be an independent investigation-working solely from home can be daunting. Mr Russell and I have hopefully outlined really clear guidelines to set up our Y12's and so far they are producing some outstanding work. We are very proud of how they are getting their teeth stuck in to literature surrounding their chosen topic and thinking about how to collect their own primary data from afar. I have been in touch with the subject officer for Eduqas A-Level Geography. She has informed us that fieldwork may look different this year at KS5 (online questionnaires instead of face-to face) and she has advised us to carry on delivering our content for our A-Level exams as normal. Having time in the last half term of this year to re-cap content learnt at the start of the year (Changing Places and Coasts) will be worthwhile and we do intend to do an assessment.

I am sure that future updates from exam boards and the DfE may steer our journey in Geography next year, in a different direction to what we had planned. However, as a department, we will continue to consider how we will ensure that effective Geography learning can be done at home for now. As soon as we are back in the classroom, we will also be making sure that we carefully think about re-building knowledge and skills as well as preparing our exam year groups for what will come next summer.

Miss Glew

History

History Curriculum Changes and Amendments

We have spent the past few years tweaking and amending our KS3 History curriculum to ensure a great grounding for our budding historians to flourish, and to provide excellent preparation for KS4 and beyond. Then, the coronavirus crisis struck. As we adapt to the 'new normal', we're forced to reassess - basing our understanding on how students are accessing the work, and how well they are understanding the enquiry questions. At the core of a good History curriculum is knowledge. Knowledge of key events and concepts are vital for an understanding of the changes and continuities of the past. With this focus, we hope to encourage a curiosity and passion in History. So, the key questions are how do we as teachers know what our students know in this virtual learning environment, and how do we amend the curriculum to reflect this?

At the beginning of lockdown, initial instincts (I know some people's instincts are different to others!) suggested we set KS3 project work based on our current topics. With detailed lists of topic areas and research starting points many of our students coped impressively and produced fantastically well researched, referenced and presented pieces of work. However, we've sequenced our curriculum to ensure we revisit key concepts throughout KS3. For example, Y7 will consider the changing nature of government through studying the monarchy in Tudor England; Y8 will revisit and develop this concept of government when we study the Rise of the Dictators in Interwar Europe.

To help secure this consolidation of knowledge and key concepts, we'll be building on our successful use of retrieval strategies in KS4 and KS5. Quizzing via SHHW for KS3 is easy to introduce, self-marked and will give us a good indication of what students can remember from previous topics. As we know, the students see this as low-stakes testing and yet it brings them back to concepts they might have otherwise forgotten, and helps them to link their new knowledge to previous hooks.

We've also thought carefully about whether some of our curriculum content is appropriate for home learning. For example, we've postponed our Y8 unit on The Holocaust until Y9 as we felt it needed a sensitive teacher-led approach. The knock-on effect is then remodelling our Y9 curriculum to firstly plug this knowledge gap, and secondly ensure coverage of the National Curriculum. This remodelling will be influenced/constrained by time needed to begin the GCSE course later in the year.

We strive to make curriculum changes which enable our students to sustain a passion for the subject and prepare them for future study. So, with the core principles of knowledge and curiosity at the heart of our thinking, we hope we're making the right decisions for our students.

Mr Doran

