

ST ALBANS

INDEPENDENT COLLEGE

Curriculum Policy

The College curriculum is designed to provide an enriching environment for students to achieve their very best. The College is built upon the principle that the best way for students to achieve their academic potential is via small group classes, excellent teaching and personal guidance. Our academic environment is designed to support, motivate and promote the personal development of students so that they can achieve their academic goals. Students enjoy our informal, friendly atmosphere that emphasises a mature and independent approach to their studies.

We offer a wide range of A-level and GCSE courses, including Maths and Sciences, Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities. The A-level programme is designed to be flexible so that any combination of Year One A Levels, Year Two A Levels and intensive one-year A-Level can usually be offered. All our teachers are highly qualified and experienced, many of whom are either current or former examiners.

Class sizes are limited to no more than seven students so that every student is assured of personal support so that they can build confidence in their achievements.

The high-achieving ethos at the College is fostered by our mentor system that continuously monitors students' progress across all of their subjects and provides personal guidance and motivation for students to achieve their best. Exam practice and class discussions are key features of our approach.

Discipline with regards to academic work, attendance and punctuality is rigorously maintained, but there are few other constraints and rules.

STUDENT SUPPORT

As a small Independent College, we are able to promote an informal and friendly atmosphere. Our students benefit from the individual support they receive and from the

hardworking and high-achieving culture we foster. Students can be on first name terms with their teachers and there is no formal dress code. They are, however, expected to take a mature and committed approach to their studies.

PERSONAL MENTORS

Every student is assigned to a personal mentor for their time at the College. Regular meetings with their personal mentor help students to explore any issues related to their learning so that they are able to fulfil their academic potential. Our personal mentor system ensures that student progress is continuously monitored across all of their subjects. Personal mentors are also available for any matters of pastoral care that may arise during the year.

PROGRESS REPORTS AND PARENTS MEETINGS

Subject reports and comments from personal mentors are sent to parents twice a year. Parents are also invited to attend consultation evenings with the personal mentors and principals, during the autumn and spring terms, to discuss their son or daughter's progress. Regular and informal meetings and communication between parents, students and subject teachers help to provide a constructive forum for assessing student progress.

Throughout the academic year parents are always welcome to contact the College or personal mentor.

EXAMINATION PRACTICE

To help develop exam technique and to monitor progress, our students are required to sit scheduled practice tests throughout the year. These tests will be a combination of shorter exams on particular elements of a course and complete mock exams on an entire module. They are all taken under strict exam conditions.

STUDY SKILLS

Throughout the academic year we provide additional classes that focus on specific study skills such as note taking, time management and organisation, revision techniques and planning. These skills are also taught within subjects but our experience suggests that it

is extremely valuable to the students that this additional support is provided outside of lesson time too. Sessions are provided outside of lesson time so that all students at the College can attend.

Study Skills seminars can sometimes highlight specific areas of need for individual students. Once this has occurred, Personal Mentors provide individual support and guidance to address the issues.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our primary aim at St Albans Independent College is to equip students with the best possible education. However, we do not see this as our only responsibility. We understand that young people joining the College are at an important juncture in their lives. As they enter adulthood they will be required to be more responsible for their actions, develop their personal autonomy and consider wider social, moral and cultural issues. To this end, we have a rolling program of thought provoking and entertaining events in place that provide students with important opportunities for personal development.

Induction, at the start of every academic year, consists of all students attending a whole day of activities. These include team-building exercise and efforts to introduce the students to the College ethos. The nature of the College is such that there are few opportunities for the whole student body to get together, so this is seen as a good opportunity to form social bonds outside of lessons.

Students in Year 10, 11 and 12 attend lessons in PSHCE. These lessons run throughout the year for students of GCSE age, whilst older students have lessons in the winter term. The outline of the PSHCE lessons can be found in the PSHCE Policy.

Students at the College are at a very formative moment in their lives and the College provides advice and guidance for any of the potential directions they may be going. We provide a series of UCAS seminars aimed at students who are applying to university. These are presented by the Principal and the College has an excellent record of placing students at universities as a consequence. Each student's personal mentor will also help them to prepare their application, giving guidance on course and institution choice as

well as helping them to write their personal statement. External experts come in to the College on a yearly basis to provide expertise and advice on apprenticeships. We have also engaged experts from a variety of major companies to run workshops on applications for work, including CV production and interview skills. Each of these strands of advice are both well-attended and well-received.

College Trips are organised so that students have a chance to socialise outside of lessons and across Year Group boundaries. Activities undertaken include go-karting, golf days and ten-pin bowling,

We have a fascinating program of eminent guest speakers who share our belief that young people need to be nurtured in ways that are not limited to the academic subjects they study. Previous speakers have come from a wide variety of backgrounds including academia, media, politics, art and business. We organise trips to various events such as the theatre, academic conferences and exhibitions.

We encourage our students to engage in and organise fundraising events for good causes. Students nominate at least two Charity Representatives each year to organise charitable events over the course of the year. Students at the College were awarded The British Red Cross Humanitarian Active School Award, having taken part in five challenges, which included First Aid Training, Humanitarian Education and fund raising. Other charitable events run by the students have included fancy dress days, cake sales and sponsored events.

Our program of Personal Development is designed to bring students together, to help them develop their critical thinking, broaden their horizons and develop their self-confidence and social skills. In our experience, nurturing students in this way has a direct and positive impact on their academic success.

TWO YEAR A-LEVEL COURSES

Students join St Albans Independent College because they are attracted by our small class sizes, excellent teaching and more informal setting. They benefit from our friendly, supportive and individually tailored educational environment.

Students can choose from a wide choice of subjects and there are no constraints on the combinations which may be taken. Our two-year A-level courses are suited to students who are either continuing at the College after completing Year 11 or to those who have joined the College having completed their GCSEs elsewhere. Courses may also be suited to students who have had some experience of A-level studies but wish to restart a full two-year A-level programme. Two year programmes allow students the opportunity to explore a subject in more depth and the time to consolidate their ideas. It can also give students fresh from completing GCSEs the time to develop and enhance their academic skills. Most students will study four Year One A Levels in the lower sixth year, of which three subjects are carried forward to the second year.

INTENSIVE ONE YEAR A-LEVEL COURSES

Full one-year A-level courses are intensive, highly structured and well suited to students who are retaking AS-level modules at the same time as studying the A2 modules for the first time. Students will therefore complete the full A-level in one year.

The one year programme may also be suitable to those with previous experience of A-level studies who wish take a new subject. Courses are structured so that students study Year One modules in the winter term followed by Year Two modules in the spring. New government regulations mean that students must sit all their exams in the summer session but they will be given ample opportunities to practise exam technique and be given detailed feedback on their performance.

RETAKE COURSES

Intensive one year retake courses are offered in most subjects for examination in the summer. Our courses are designed to provide a thorough review of the subject area. Particular attention is given to helping students to develop the necessary exam skills and to building their confidence. Each year we take on a number of students who may already have respectable A-level grades but wish to retake either exams in order to achieve a higher overall grade and therefore have the opportunity to widen their choice of universities, or to re-apply with higher grades to secure a place on a highly competitive course. Courses are intensive and are only suited to students who may have fallen slightly short of their expected grades.

YEAR TWO A LEVEL COURSES

Year Two A Level courses are popular at the College and attract students who, for various reasons, have decided to continue the second year of their A-Levels at St Albans Independent College. Often Year Two courses are taken in conjunction with Intensive One Year Courses or Retake Courses. In most cases, students will join the second year of an existing two-year A-Level course, although it may also be possible to join later into the academic year.

AS LEVEL COURSES

We offer a wide range of courses for students who may wish to take an additional AS Level subject over one year. Such courses may appeal to students who wish to gain additional UCAS points, or to those who are unable to study a chosen subject at school.

GCSE

Students joining St Albans Independent College to study GCSEs do so for a variety of reasons, the most common being that parents feel that their son or daughter will benefit from a small, supportive and hard working environment. After only a short stay at the College students find the supportive atmosphere builds confidence in their ability to express themselves, learn effectively and ultimately succeed.

The College is relatively small so there are very few unfamiliar faces and students soon feel at home. Small classes also help to ensure that teachers are able to focus on the needs of each student.

GCSE COURSES

GCSE courses are offered in most mainstream subjects. Courses may be taken over one or two years, depending on the age, circumstance and ability of each student. One year courses are for those students who wish to transfer from other schools at the end of year ten or for those students who wish to take additional subjects or improve existing grades. Two year courses give students the opportunity to develop key study skills and the time to discover where their aptitudes and potential lie, before finalising their subject choices.

All students in Year 10 and Year 11 attend lessons in core subjects of English, Maths and Science. They are also enrolled on classes in Citizenship (as part of PSHCE) and PE on a weekly basis. Religious Education and Sex and Relationship Education also take place in PSHCE lessons. Full details of the PSHCE courses can be found in the PSHCE policy. The College offers lessons in each of the following subject areas: Arts, Design and Technology, Humanities and Modern Foreign Languages.

A core package of five GCSEs is offered to new students consisting of English Language, Maths, Double Science and one other subject, alongside PSHCE and PE lessons. This is taught over 20 hours per week. Students are also encouraged to take on other GCSE subjects as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

GCSE students at the College also take part in an ongoing Allotment Project run by a horticultural therapist. We have found that the chance to be outside and working on an allotment on a weekly basis can have extremely beneficial effects. It is not a compulsory lesson, but it is encouraged as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

The progress of each student is monitored by their personal mentor who will always be on hand to offer guidance and encouragement when dealing with either academic or personal matters.

SUBJECT DEPARTMENTS

ARTS & HUMANITIES

Arts and Humanities at St Albans Independent College is a vibrant area of the curriculum, delivered by a team of dedicated and highly experienced teachers. Through lively discussion and debate in small classes, the focus of each course is to develop the skills of analysis and evaluation, as well as ensuring a sound factual knowledge of the subject. Weekly written assignments and regular tests are used to deepen the learning process, monitor student progress and to provide a strong basis for revision.

Art & Design (Fine Art)

English Language

English Literature
Film Studies
French
Geography
German
History
History of Art
Italian
Media Studies
Music
Photography
Religious Studies
Spanish

MATHS & COMPUTING

As one of the largest departments in the College, our A-level Maths students follow a traditional programme of pure 'Core' Maths modules, combined with Statistics and Mechanics. We can also cater for students who wish to take other applied modules to advance their knowledge into areas such as Decision maths. For those who wish to specialise in Maths, perhaps with the view to reading the subject at University, we also offer Further Maths. Each course tries to emphasise a clear and thorough understanding of concepts and techniques, backed up by regular exam practice and past paper analysis.

Computer Science and ICT are now established subjects at the College. Both courses offer a balanced range of practical activities and personal research in readiness for either higher education or the workplace.

The College is also a registered centre for the European Computer Driving License qualification which we offer at Level 1 and Level 2. This allows students to demonstrate the computer literacy to future employers or educational institutions.

SCIENCE

The college has an excellent Science Department with a team of specialist and highly experienced teachers, many of whom are current examiners. We aim to develop in students the scientific disciplines of research, analysis and logical thought and to develop their ability to think independently and creatively. These skills are developed through discussion and analysis of the subject matter and regular practical sessions which give students the opportunity to develop their learning. Regular tests and practice of past papers help students to develop their exam technique. Many of the students taking A-level science courses at the college will be applying for competitive courses such as biochemistry, engineering and medicine. Our science teachers are highly experienced and have an excellent record of helping students achieve their academic needs in these subjects:

Biology

Chemistry

Human Biology

Physics

Sports Science

SOCIAL SCIENCE

A-levels give students a chance to explore fascinating new fields of inquiry such as Business Studies, Economics, Government & Politics, Psychology and Sociology which in most cases they will not have studied at GCSE. With the current popularity of University degree courses such as criminology, management and psychology, it is not surprising that social science courses at the College are popular, with student numbers continuing to grow. Each discipline provides an ideal foundation for future study as well as an important stepping stone towards a future career:

Business Studies

Economics

Government & Politics

Psychology

Sociology