



Soar Valley College

A SPECIALIST MATHS AND COMPUTING COLLEGE

ASPIRE ENJOY ACHIEVE



Year 8 Curriculum Handbook

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The Curriculum at Key Stage 3

Our curriculum at Key Stage 3 is designed to provide students with the skills needed to prepare them for a successful future. When students arrive at Soar Valley College they study a number of core curriculum subjects. These are organised into a two-week timetable, with the number of hours for each subject during the two weeks as shown in the table below:

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
English	7	6	6
Mathematics	6	6	6
Science	6	6	6
Art & Design	2	2	2
Computing	2	2	3
Design & Technology	4	4	4
Drama	2	2	1
Geography	4	4	4
History	4	4	4
Languages	5	5	5
Music	2	2	2
Physical Education	4	4	4
Religious Education	2	2	2
Citizenship/Personal Development		1	1

A small number of students will be part of our Plus Group. For these students the transition to secondary school is made more gradual by grouping some subjects together; these are taught by our specialist team who use the subject content to develop basic skills.

During Year 7 there is a strong emphasis on the teaching of reading, communicating and writing. This emphasis on literacy continues throughout the time the pupils spend at Soar Valley.

An induction programme is built into Year 7, during which students will learn about our expectations, how to behave in different social situations and how to organise themselves so they are ready to learn.

Some general ways parents can support include:

Year 7 Settling-In Evening

This is held in October so that parents can meet the Form Tutor and find out how their child has settled in to life at secondary school. A full Subject Parents' Evening is held later in the year. These are valuable opportunities to find out how your child is progressing and what they can do to improve further.

Reports

Reports are sent home three times a year and outline the effort a child is making in each subject together with any concerns about behaviour and/or homework completion. They will also indicate targets for children and the progress they are making towards meeting those. Discussing the report with your child is an important way of engaging with their learning. Parents can help by celebrating successes, discussing where things have not gone so well and setting targets for future improvement.

Homework

Parents can see all homework set for students via www.satchelone.com a link for which is on our school website. Students also have a Planner for recording homework, which parents are asked to check weekly and sign. Providing a calm and quiet place to work at home will help your child to focus.

Healthy lifestyles

A healthy diet can make a big difference to children's concentration in school. This includes restricting fizzy drinks and sugary foods. Another important factor is a reasonable bedtime so that your child is able to concentrate on their learning the next day. It is also advisable to make sure access to games consoles, mobile phones and computers is monitored to make sure your child is able to spend sufficient time on their schoolwork.

Further information about our curriculum can be found in this booklet, together with information on how you can support your child's learning in all subjects.

Reading, Writing and Communication across the Curriculum



What is it and what do we expect?

At Soar Valley we think it is important to develop the abilities to read, write and communicate effectively in all lessons. We want students to feel proud of their work! We encourage students to try to use neat handwriting in all lessons, as well as writing in full sentences and paragraphs where it is necessary, as well as using correct punctuation.

All classrooms have a literacy box. This box has lots of resources inside to help with reading, writing and spoken communication. Throughout the college we have a Green Pen Policy.

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for checking their work, before the teacher does, making corrections and improvements in a green pen. This helps them to learn which mistakes they make often and where extra help may be needed.

As part of the Induction Programme at Soar Valley, students are given an English Handbook and a mini Dictionary to keep. These should be brought to school every day, to use in all subjects. In the Handbook there is lots of advice to help students with reading, writing and communication skills, essential for all lessons.

What can parents do to help?

Encourage children to read for pleasure. All students will have a school library book which they will swap at least once every two weeks. They should also try to read lots of different texts, including magazines, newspapers, websites, fiction and non-fiction.

Once homework has been completed, parents can support by encouraging children to read it aloud. When children read aloud, it is easier for them to spot their mistakes. They can also be encouraged to make corrections and improvements in their green pen.

If a homework task is proving difficult, encourage the use of their English Handbooks, where they will find a variety of helpful tool kits that may give them ideas and support for all subjects.

Useful Websites:

www.literacytrust.org.uk

English

The English Curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Inspire an appreciation of the importance of reading and literature.
- Develop knowledge about the use of language in a wide range of texts.
- Build knowledge of how to use written language themselves in a variety of structures, forms, contexts and audiences.

In Year 8 we want students to continue to have a rich, enjoyable and challenging experience, leading them to engage with and to be highly motivated by their English lessons, as well as to understand and value the functional aspects of the subject.

In order to build their knowledge and skills, students are encouraged to work with increasing independence as well as with different people. We offer appropriate resources and learning activities for all students whatever their ability, including the use of technology to support learning.

Students are encouraged to challenge themselves in their reading, are given opportunities to read in class, are given time to independently read in the library, and are encouraged to read for pleasure beyond their English lessons.

Homework aims to provide students with a variety of tasks to promote independence, to prepare for or further their learning in lessons. The length and complexity of the task will be suited to your child's needs and ability and will show progression over the course of their time in KS3.

During **Year 8**, students study:

- **How do writers create characters in fiction?**

Reading and analysing Sherlock Holmes by Arthur Conan Doyle and Curious Incident of The Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon; learning about the detective fiction genre and how this influences the text; learning how to analyse character and language; letter writing.

- **How can we use the gothic genre to influence our own writing?**

Reading and analysing Philip Pullman's adaptation of Frankenstein and extracts from the original text by Mary Shelley and other well-known texts from the genre; learning about the gothic genre and its context; reading 19th Century non-fiction; writing narratives in the style of the gothic genre with a focus on narrative perspective.

- **Rhetoric: how do writers persuade their readers in fiction, non-fiction and poetry?**

Understanding the origins of rhetoric and persuasion; learning and analysing texts using Aristotle's theory of rhetoric; analysing a range of speeches and articles with a focus on how writers present their viewpoints; writing persuasively; article writing; reading and analysing how writers present their viewpoints in poetry.

What parents can do to help:

On the school website, there is a very helpful link to '*Understanding Progress in English: A Guide for Parents*'.

The helpful advice given on the *Reading, Writing and Communication across the Curriculum* page is also excellent and very relevant to English.

Talk to your son or daughter about their English work and English homework. Encourage them to discuss what they are learning in their lessons and explain their ideas. Encourage them to proofread their English work and homework and to revise knowledge and skills covered in the lessons.

Encourage your son or daughter to read for pleasure and, if possible, read together. If you don't know what to choose, ask Ms. Codling in the library and have a look at [Accessit!](#) The latter can be accessed via the library portal on the college's website.

Useful websites:

- [BBC Bitesize KS3 English](#)
- [Sam Learning](#)

Mathematics

The Mathematics Curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Develop a broad knowledge and understanding of the mathematical concepts that allow students to become numerate and resilient problem solvers.
- Help them understand the links between key mathematical concepts and see how they are used in a variety of interesting and useful contexts.
- Allow them to realise the power that mathematics has to help us communicate effectively in a technological world.
- Allow them to appreciate the intrinsic and aesthetic qualities of mathematical shapes, proofs and patterns.
- Allow them to realise the thrill and fulfilment of tackling a problem or a puzzle. Recognise that good mathematicians are usually stuck but there is fun when you try to get out of the maze!

The mathematics course in Year 8 is designed to build on the skills and understanding that students develop in their Year 7. As such the headings are very similar but topics are developed to a higher degree and the complexity of problems increases. Students are still placed in setted groups according to their abilities. Regular assessment helps to ensure that all potential is spotted and the groups are adjusted accordingly during the year.

Topics covered:

Our programme focuses on the three key elements of mathematics – Number, Algebra and Geometry – which are developed alongside a study of Statistics. All of these elements are developed in Year 8 and the experience is enriched for students with opportunities to develop their problem solving ability. Our scheme of learning covers all of the requirements for the National Curriculum and is scheduled as follows.

Term One	Term Two	Term Three
Properties of Number Indices	Proportional Equivalence	Order of Operations
Division and Fractions	Properties of Shapes	Sequences, Rules, Graphs
Place Value and Arithmetic	Angles	Equations
Rounding and Estimation	Transformations	Probability and Ratio
Length, Area and Volume	Statistics	Constructions
Expressions		Scale Drawing
Time, Units and measures		

What parents can do to help:

Homework and learning outside of the classroom is encouraged at all times. There are many ways students can enhance their class studies and we have invested in some quality resources to help. Our favourite online homework site is [Mathswatch.co.uk](https://www.mathswatch.co.uk). Every child will be given an individual login to access this site. Other sites that we subscribe to, and would highly recommend, are www.mymaths.co.uk and www.samlearning.com

These sites cover all of the above topics and provide extra lessons and questions for students to work on at their own pace. Questions are marked instantly giving immediate feedback about their progress.

Science

The Science Curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Allow them to acquire scientific knowledge and understanding through the specific disciplines of Biology, Chemistry and Physics.
- Develop understanding of the nature, processes and methods of science through different types of scientific enquiries that help them to answer scientific questions about the world around them.
- Allow them to learn to apply observational, practical, modelling, enquiry and problem-solving skills both in the laboratory, and other learning environments.

The Year 8 science course builds upon the fundamental concepts students have been taught in Year 7. The year begins with an Enquiry Processes topic which prepares students for the new working scientifically skills that will be covered in Year 8. Each student follows a curriculum that gives them the opportunity to gain not only the knowledge and understanding of the scientific world around them but also gives them the experience of conducting experiments and working as scientists.

Throughout the year students are continually assessed throughout 3 units of work, each containing a component of biology, chemistry and physics. Students complete 2 written assessments per unit and then complete an exam booklet at the end of each unit. Students in Year 8 are set by ability into 4 strands.

Topics covered:

Biology	Chemistry	Physics
Ecology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant structures and processes. • Photosynthesis Organisms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organ systems in the human body • Respiration Genes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNA and genetic modification • Natural selection • Biodiversity 	Earth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global warming and the atmosphere • Natural cycles • Obtaining metals Matter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atoms and the periodic table • Properties of different materials and substances Reactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemical equations • Types of chemical reaction 	Forces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drag force and Moments • Pressure in solids, liquids and gases Energy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work • Energy and Heating • Insulation Waves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound • Light • Vision and hearing

What parents can do to help:

Parents can help support learning by discussing students' homework, all on SatchelOne, to further support learning activities in college.

Each topic will have a paper homework sheet for students to complete at home while the topic is taught in school, as well as weekly recall quizzes set using the Educake website. Parents should help students to check areas they are unsure of and test their knowledge and should support their child with making flash cards and graphic organisers to aid revision.

Talk about science in the news and encourage students to come to college with questions about science news. Encourage your child to read as well as listen to science news.

Useful websites:

KS3 BBC Bitesize Science at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks3/science/>

For self-assessment students should use Educake at www.educake.co.uk

Art & Design

The Art Curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Develop creative thinking skills and a love of learning by experiencing a range of different materials, techniques and processes.
- Build upon their knowledge and skills.
- Ensure students acquire a broad knowledge and understanding of the Art world and the creative industries which will help to prepare them for their next steps.

Year 8 students will further develop their understanding of the key visual elements: shape, line, tone, colour, pattern and texture. They will be taught how to raise their level of skill and creativity in a wide range of different media such as pencil, paint, inks, and collage. As well as developing 3D making skills.

Students will complete two main units of work during the year:

Character Design:

- Students will use their imagination to create 'automatic drawings' of characters.
- Pattern, Texture and colour will be a focus.
- Various book illustrators will be studied and their work will be used as a basis for original ideas.
- Students will develop a range of ideas for 3D characters
- Recycled materials will be used to create a 3D character.

Portraits:

- Students will research a variety of different portrait artists.
- They will practise drawing facial features so that they look accurate and realistic.
- Students will create a final realistic portrait.

All units involve studying, appreciating, and learning from the work of important artists.

What parents can do to help:

Each student will be given a sketchbook that they will use in class and for homework. Parents can really support students, and boost their confidence, simply by admiring the amazing work they have produced!

Homework tasks can be viewed on Show My Homework and students will also be given printed resources to support their work. Occasionally watching television programs about Art is also a great way to widen students' knowledge and develop their cultural awareness.

Useful websites:

The Museum of Modern art www.moma.org

The Tate Gallery www.tate.org.uk

The National Gallery www.nationalgallery.org.uk

The National Portrait gallery www.npg.org.uk

Students often need to research different artists or art movements, and a simple search on Google will give immediate access to an significant number of works of art by a particular artist.

Design & Technology

The Design & Technology curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Inspire students to actively engage with confidence and success in an increasingly technological world.
- Encourage risk taking, resourcefulness, innovation and support them to become capable individuals.
- Allow them to make vital contributions to the creativity, culture and well-being of our community.

Topics covered in Year 8:

Food and Nutrition: In Year 8, students develop a deeper understanding of the functions of the food groups and the importance of a balanced diet. Students learn more advanced cooking methods and technical skills, and independence is gradually encouraged. Theory content is supported by experiments to engage and embed knowledge. Clear links are made between the theory and practical lessons to further ensure learning is embedded.

Mechanical Devices: Throughout this project students really get to grips with understanding and investigating a range of mechanical device systems. Alongside theoretical elements, students will also be involved with some practical exploration, model-making and experimentation. There will be cross-curricula links with Science and Mathematics when students are learning about forces and stresses, movement and motion.

Electronic Systems (Speaker): This design and make project involves a wide range of activities which closely follows the design process. Students will begin by researching the work of famous and influential designers. They will then investigate and research properties and characteristics of material, including smart materials. They will also consider the use and impact of plastics on the environment. During this project, students are introduced to simple electronic components and electrical theory as well as the process of soldering. Through designing and modelling students will develop their ideas before using CAD to achieve a high quality outcome. Final ideas will be sublimation printed and circuits will be then be soldered using the necessary components to create a working speaker product.

Textiles (Phone Pillow and Snack Wrapper): In this Year 8 Textiles project, students will learn about fabric construction methods, properties, standard components and tools and equipment. Students will spend the first part of the project designing a phone pillow and the second part recreating their favourite snack wrapper in felt. These two products facilitate the teaching of a number of key skills including the use of Computer Aided Design (CAD) to develop the pattern for the phone pillow. They will also compare commercial printing methods to sublimation printing in school. The snack wrapper project, inspired by the work of Lucy Sparrow, focuses on the use of hand embroidery stitches.

What parents can do to help:

We would appreciate each student coming to each Design & Technology lesson fully equipped with quality colouring pencils, pencil, pen, rubber and a black fine liner. A regular checking of Show My Homework, which will often have support material uploaded to aid learning, would be appreciated. We encourage all students to take pride in their work, so support and encouragement at home would be advantageous. Additionally, should there be any difficulties providing ingredients during Food Technology lessons, you will find staff supportive in solving any issues with advance notice.

Useful Websites:

www.bbc.com/bitesize, www.technologystudent.co.uk, www.Food4life.gov.uk
BBC television programmes (available on iPlayer): Dragon's Den, Inside the Factory.

Drama

The Drama Curriculum at Soar Valley College aims to encourage all students to be independent learners through:

- Encouraging tolerance and understanding across a range of situations and experiences
- Offering experiences that develop students' ability to question and that challenge their perceptions of the world around them
- Developing a range of transferrable skills valued by employers

We aim to inspire a love of learning, while building the skills and knowledge to succeed in future endeavours.

During Year 8:

Students will explore the many genres of drama including the different styles of work that can be created. Students will be comfortable in groups and begin to take on more leadership of their work, using different skills to solve problems. They will build upon previous knowledge of theatre and begin to develop awareness of how theatre and drama serve different purposes. There is a continued focus on independence and self-reflection throughout and students are encouraged to review and develop their ideas and knowledge continuously.

Examples of topics include:

Melodrama	Students work with a different genre of performance, looking at stereotypes and how performance can influence an audience. There are opportunities to work with multimedia.
Silent Movies	Having developed their understanding of stereotypes and story structure, students are encouraged to look at and learn about other ways to communicate meaning beyond the spoken word. Using their skills of non-naturalistic performance they then create their own silent movies.
Exploring messages: Brecht	Having developed their knowledge of non-naturalistic drama and how meaning are conveyed, students move on to exploring the potential communicative nature of theatre and performance art.
Creating original work	Having explored how theatre and performance can be developed to communicate meaning, students embark upon their own project where they respond to a performance development brief in line with those provided at KS4. This provides challenging work where students use the knowledge of year 7 and 8 to create their own original work for an audience.

What parents can do to help:

Encourage your child to talk about their classwork when at home. Discuss different films and performances and the different elements which go into creating a piece of drama whether it be musicals, adverts, soaps or films. Check Show My Homework to see what work is being prepared for the next lesson and where written work is required, encourage the best effort and presentation from your child.

Useful websites:

www.youtube.com the National Theatre channel

www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize

<http://ntlive.nationaltheatre.org.uk>

Geography

The Geography Curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Help them appreciate and make sense of the awe-inspiring world in which they live
- Create enquiring minds that are interested in geographical issues that affect us now and in the future
- Give them challenging opportunities to experience the connections between people, place and the environment on a variety of scales

The Geography curriculum encourages students to develop and apply their existing enquiry skills and build on the success of Year 7. The knowledge, skills and understanding are embedded across the curriculum and into Year 8.

Topics covered:

Fantastic Places Examines why a place is classed as fantastic. This may be due to its physical characteristics or because extreme events have taken place there. Topics such as the nuclear explosion in Chernobyl and shifting stones in Death Valley are studied.

Are There Too Many People On Our Planet? Studies how and why global population is changing and what impact the change may have on people and the environment. A case study of China's one child policy is covered.

Can India's Urban Environments Cope? A country study of India, exploring how a population explosion has seen illegal settlements created in order to accommodate the vast number of people. A study of Dharavi is undertaken and a decision-making exercise about how best to improve the shanty town.

What Shapes the Land? Rivers and Flooding Investigates the journey of a river from source to mouth and the processes involved in its formation including erosion, deposition and transportation. The unit also looks at management of a river and the consequences this brings for certain parts of the river.

What Shapes the Land? Coasts Investigates the links between the sea and the land and how these two powerful zones conflict with one another. The unit looks at Happisburgh on the Norfolk coast and how the sea is slowly destroying the town affecting the people, the economy and the environment.

What parents can do to help:

Identifying landforms using Google Earth. <https://www.google.com/earth/>

Reading contemporary news articles relating to the themes under investigation – The BBC Science and Environment website is excellent for this purpose http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science_and_environment/

Discussing ways in which students own lives and decisions are connected to the issues under investigation

Useful websites:

National Geographic <https://www.geography.org.uk/Visual-Geography-Useful-Websites>

The world at Seven Billion <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-15391515>

Rivers <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zs92tfr>

Coasts <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z6bd7ty>

History

The History Curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Inspire a curiosity about the past, a desire to learn more and to find enjoyment in doing so.
- Allow students to gain knowledge of the past so as to help understand the present.
- Allow students to gain the skills necessary to study History and apply them as a historian would.
- Allow students to master the subject.

In Year 8 we cover the following topics:

Elizabeth I

We pick up where we left in Year 7 with the Tudors and look at Elizabeth I, exploring the religious, political and social changes that took place during this period. Students explore questions such as: Should Elizabeth get married? How successful was Elizabeth I in solving the religious problems of her reign? And finally, Why did the Spanish Armada fail?

The Stuarts

We explore the changes that took place starting with the reign of James I and ending with the reign of William and Mary. Particularly important is the English Civil war and the impact that this had on the way that England was ruled. By studying this period of history students begin to develop an understanding of how the government of England developed from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy.

Victorian England and the British Empire

Firstly we explore the impact of the Industrial Revolution on England between 1750 and 1900, and how England developed from a rural economy, largely dependent on farming, to an industrial economy whose trade dominated much of the world. Students develop an understanding of the impact of these changes on the lives of ordinary people by studying the living and working conditions of those who lived in industrial towns. Alongside this students also study the growth of the British Empire and consider challenging questions such as: Was the British Empire a good or a bad thing?

The Transatlantic Slave Trade

Students get an overview of the development of slavery from the 15th through to the 19th Centuries before studying the transatlantic slave trade in detail. They explore challenging questions such as: Why did some people support slavery? Why was slavery allowed to happen? Why was slavery abolished?

What parents can do to help:

Taking their children to visit local historical sites such as the Richard III Visitor Centre and Bosworth Battlefield.

Visiting the library and getting age appropriate books regarding the topics above.

Watching the news and reading newspapers with their children to encourage an awareness of and interest in current affairs.

Useful general websites:

www.schoolhistory.co.uk www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ www.bbc.co.uk/history/forkids/
www.historyonthenet.com/
www.samlearning.com
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/zk26n39>

ICT and Computing

The Curriculum in ICT and Computing at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Develop transferable skills for a changing digital world.
- Implement computational thinking to solve problems.
- Enable students to apply knowledge learnt when using information and communication technologies in everyday life.

In Year 8, ICT builds upon the essential concepts that students have been taught in Year 7. We aim to give students the opportunity to develop their understanding of ICT and computing and give them the experience of ICT skills in various software applications.

Topics covered:

Term One Topics	Term Two Topics	Term Three Topics
Cyber Crime, Online Safety Awareness	Spreadsheet Modelling - Creating & using spreadsheets	Data Representation Binary/Denary conversions & Binary Addition
Text base Programming with Python	Computational Thinking Pseudocode & Flowcharts	Systems Architecture Operating System, Application & Systems Software

What parents can do to help:

- Make your child aware of how to stay safe when using the Internet. Visit the websites with them, and discuss ways how to stay safe online i.e. only adding people you know on social media sites
- Discuss ways to protect personal data when online – e.g. changing privacy settings.
- Explain that computers need specific instructions creating a set of steps to be followed in solving a particular problem or carrying out a task.
- Look at online databases such as Amazon & eBay. Discuss ways in which different types of information is presented and organised.
- Look at the spreadsheet Excel Video tutorials on the teachict.com website and have a go at doing them.
- Parents can help support learning by discussing students' homework, which will be shared on Show My Homework, to further support learning activities in school.
- Quick topic quizzes and games for each of the units of work are available on the teachict.com website. Parents can help students to check areas they are unsure of and test their knowledge.
- Talk about ICT and Computing in the news and encourage your child to read and find out about new technologies in sports/leisure/education/entertainment/industry etc.

Useful Websites:

- https://www.teach-ict.com/gcse_new/gcse_ict_quizzes.htm
- <https://www.samlearning.com/>
- <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>
- <https://www.codecademy.com/learn/learn-python>
- <https://www.codeforlife.education/rapidrouter/>

Languages

The MFL Curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- inspire a love of language learning
- instil linguistic knowledge and transferable skills in our students, which will equip them with the necessary adaptability to engage with the opportunities available to them in and beyond their academic and social environment
- encourage respect and understanding towards other languages, cultures and customs in a diverse and changing world.

In Year 8 students continue to study either French or German. As they enter the second year of their language learning course we begin to introduce them to a wider range of language structures and vocabulary as they continue to acquire more language learning skills.

We continue to build upon the phonics work that has been started in Year 7 and the emphasis is on using the target language in the classroom to help to develop the skill of more spontaneous speech, whilst embedding the other three language skills. We aim to develop confident and proficient linguists. As in Year 7 we have a wide and varied range of resources that we use, many of which are digital and can be accessed at home.

Whilst the topic areas that are covered in French and German remain the same for both languages, there is a different grammatical focus as each language is different.

As students become more independent language learners they are exposed to more literary texts and authentic materials to place their learning in context. We continue to learn through games, songs, stories and poems as a means to build up confidence with the spoken language in particular.

Autumn Term – Food and Important Celebrations

Students learn how to talk and write about celebrations that are significant to them. They are encouraged to express their opinions and to use different tenses to refer to present, past or future celebrations. They learn all about language connected to food and drink and how this is culturally significant. A chance to visit the German Christmas market in Birmingham may also be offered to students studying German.

Spring Term – Free Time and Leisure

Students learn to communicate about how they spend their free time, again referring to different time frames.

Summer Term – Holidays

Students learn about different holiday destinations and to talk and write about their own experiences past, present, and future.

Students in Year 8 may be given the opportunity to visit France or Germany dependent on trip uptake from Year 9 and 10 students. A chance to visit the German Christmas market in Birmingham will be offered to students studying German.

What parents can do to help:

Parents can help by ensuring that all homework is completed to a good standard and by discussing the learning that has taken place. Helping students with vocabulary learning homeworks – by testing them at home in a fun way – can have a very positive impact. Students will also benefit from help with assessment preparation.

Useful websites:

www.linguascope.com

www.zut.org.uk

www.languagesonline.org.uk

Music

The Music Curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Inspire a love of learning through inspirational and challenging musical activities.
- Build on students' knowledge and skills of performing, composing and evaluating music from different cultures, genres and Medias to succeed through KS3 and KS4.
- Create vocational opportunities, which focus on transferable skills that enable students to succeed across the Creative Industries and beyond.

Year 8 Topics covered:

Students continue to develop their knowledge of Instrumental Skills, Elements of Music and Great Composers through music from different cultures and styles. Instruments used to support this learning are piano, guitar, bass guitar, ukulele, drums, percussion and the voice. Students are encouraged to work in groups, and to explore how their part fits into the music as a whole whilst working with other musicians. Singing is integrated throughout all projects in Year 8.

Year 8 Topics

Reggae

Exploring the musical genre of Reggae.

Off Beat

Exploring offbeat and syncopation-composing a remix.

Variations

Exploring ways to Develop Musical Ideas

Feeling the Blues

Exploring the Blues, its origins, artists and key features

All About the Bass

Exploring Bass Clef Reading and Notation alongside bass instruments

Listening and Appraising

Throughout each of the units, pupils listen to their own and others' work and undertake self and peer assessment in accordance with the Learning Pathways. Teachers use these Learning Pathways to assess pupils' work throughout the units, to drive high expectations for all, and to ensure all students achieve their full potential. Students will develop their musicianship in 3 key areas-Performance, Composition and Evaluation.

What parents can do to help:

At home parents/carers can support pupils learning in the classroom by asking questions about their learning and encouraging them to listen to a variety of music from around the world. They can also share their own musical tastes. In school, parents/carers can encourage pupils to reach their full potential in lessons, take up an instrument and take part in the various extra-curricular clubs and concerts.

Useful websites:

www.musicalfutures.org.uk

www.musictechteacher.com

www.e-chords.com

<https://edu.bandlab.com/>

Personal Development

The Personal Development Curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Educate students to become thoughtful and active citizens who engage positively and enthusiastically with public life.
- Give students the knowledge and skills needed to keep themselves healthy and safe and to prepare them for life and work in modern Britain.

The Personal Development curriculum is committed to guiding our young people to be well- rounded individuals who are equipped with the knowledge, resilience and skills to face the challenges of life with as much confidence and independence as possible.

During Personal Development lessons, two curriculum subjects are covered simultaneously:

- Citizenship Education – which aims to enable young people to make their own decisions and take responsibility for their own lives and the communities in which they live.
- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) – which helps young people to explore the Personal, Social, Health and Economic aspects of life.

In Year 8, the curriculum consists of the following units:

Term One	Term Two	Term Three
<p>Making a Difference - Active Citizenship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a Citizen? • Local, National and Global Citizenship • Taking Part in your Local Community 	<p>Crossing the Line:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyberbullying • Sexting • Peer Pressure • Self-esteem and Coping mechanisms 	<p>Drugs Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of Drugs • Caffeine and Energy Drinks • New Psychoactive Substances • Tobacco and Smoking • Binge Drinking
<p>Looking After Yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puberty • Healthy Eating • Importance of sleep and exercise • Female Genital Mutilation 	<p>Rights and Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Rights • Balancing Rights and Responsibilities • Freedom of Speech 	

What parents can do to help:

Encourage students to find out about and stay up to date with controversial topics in the media to encourage an awareness of and interest in current affairs. Discuss these topics with them so that students are able to appreciate different ways of thinking.

Useful websites:

www.bbc.co.uk

Physical Education

The Physical Education curriculum aims to allow all students access to a range of sports/physical activities that will:

- Develop their confidence, competence, motivation, knowledge and understanding to value and take part in physical activity for life.

Year 8 PE consists of 10 different activities that aim to build on the skills that students have developed in Year 7. Students will continue be set according to their practical ability and will be divided into single sex classes for most of the academic year. The length of time that students spend on each activity will vary depending on which set they are in. Activities are also adjusted accordingly to the meet the needs of the class.

Topic 1: Rugby Union	Topic 6: Health and Fitness
Topic 2: Short Tennis/Badminton	Topic 7: Athletics
Topic 3: Netball	Topic 8: Cricket/Softball
Topic 4: Team building	Topic 9: Rounders
Topic 5: Football	Topic 10: Gymnastics

The aim of Year 8 PE is to develop and nurture the students' confidence, competence in physical activities and to develop their understanding of health related fitness. A greater emphasis will be placed on leadership and independent learning, displaying positive attitudes towards each other and leading a healthy and active lifestyle.

The 3 key areas of development are:

1. Competence
2. Rules, Tactics and Strategies
3. Health and Fitness

What parents can do to help:

Following an early assessment at the start of the autumn term, students will be assessed continuously throughout each activity block. At the end of each activity block (which usually last for 5 weeks) students will be asked to self assess and identify areas of strength and weakness. Students will also be asked to identify methods of improvement and record these. Students will be graded by their teacher at the end of each activity block into a Bronze, Silver or Gold category to reflect their competence, knowledge of rules, tactics and strategies, knowledge of health and fitness and effort levels.

It would be useful if parents periodically enquired on their child's progress in PE and encouraged them to attend extra-curricular activities.

Useful websites:

www.bbc.co.uk/sport

www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/sport/fair/fairplay

Religious Education

The RE Curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Enable students to consider the impact of religious beliefs on the world, on communities and on individuals.
- Inspire curiosity, empathy, respect and debate around a range of religious and non-religious worldviews.
- Build understanding of religious beliefs and practices, to help students both now and in the future.

Year 8 topics:

	Topic Title:	In more detail:
1	Sikhism – what’s important to Sikhs?	A detailed study of key beliefs and practices within Sikhism.
2	Ethics – what’s right and what’s wrong?	Exploring and applying different ethical approaches to moral dilemmas.
3	Islam – what do Muslims believe and do?	A detailed study of key beliefs and practices within Islam.
4	Suffering – If God exists, why do people suffer?	A study of the different arguments put forward to answer the problem of suffering.
5	Christianity – How do Christians live and worship today?	We will study a range of current Christian practices and where they originate.
6	Big Questions – what should we ask to help us understand the world?	Exploring big philosophical questions like the nature of reality and whether free will exists.

What parents can do to help:

- Encourage wider reading and understanding around a topic using library books from the college or a local library.
- Look out for evidence of religion in the local community including buildings, festivals being celebrated, charitable activities etc.
- Talk and discuss with your son or daughter events in the media with religious and ethical angles to them.
- Encourage the following learnings habits in your child:
 - Coming to lessons fully equipped and ready to take part and completing all homework.
 - Being interested in what other people think and believe, and curious about why. You do not have to be from a religious background yourself to do this!
 - Expressing your views and opinions as clearly as you can.
 - Having an open mind when you come across ideas that you don’t agree with, and listening well to different opinions.
 - Thinking about how religion makes a difference to people’s lives.

Useful websites:

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/0/>
- BBC Bitesize <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/rs/>
- <http://www.request.org.uk/main/main.htm> a website useful for topics in Christianity
- <http://www.hindukids.org/> one of the many Hindu websites
- <http://www.sikhnet.com/> a Sikh site
- <http://islaminschools.com/> a Muslim site

Learning Development

The Learning Development Curriculum at Soar Valley aims to allow all students access to a range of experiences that will:

- Provide students with a “can do” approach that fosters an enjoyment for learning.
- Enable students to acquire knowledge appropriate to their developmental stage.

We strive to remove learning barriers, build resilience and ensure students are prepared to access the curriculum, by developing learning tools and strategies with them

Soar Valley College is an inclusive school and we welcome all students regardless of any additional needs that they have. Additional needs may be linked to learning, behaviour or communication difficulties or perhaps a medical need. The Learning Development Faculty will ensure that all subject teachers are aware of any additional support that your child may need and will advise teachers about the best way to provide that support.

Students are supported in a variety of ways.

- They may be taught some subjects in smaller groups.
- Small group interventions focus on specific skills ie) literacy, spelling or social skills
- Intensive short term interventions can be delivered individually ie) 1:1
- There may be an additional teacher or teaching assistant in some classes to provide specific focused support.
- Buddy reading clubs run each morning during registration.
- There is a supervised homework club available at lunchtimes where support can be given to complete homework tasks.
- Vulnerable students can attend supervised activities at break and lunchtime every day.

What parents can do to help:

- Check the student planner and encourage your child to complete homework tasks on time.
- Encourage reading for pleasure and talk about the book or magazine that your child is reading.
- Help your child to be organised so they always have the necessary equipment for school.
- Promote a supportive and positive attitude towards any interventions that the Learning Development Faculty make available to your child.

When necessary we will seek advice from other agencies to help us to provide the best support for your child. We work closely with:

Special Needs Teaching Service

- Education Psychology
- Speech and Language Therapy Services
- Behaviour Support Team

Extended Curriculum

We are extremely proud of the wide variety of activities available for our students on a daily basis which we feel bring a range of benefits and opportunities to help them to further develop their learning.

These activities occur before school, at lunch time or after school. In 2013/14 there were 115 different activities and 85% of our students attended at least 1 activity throughout the year on a regular basis. They are incredibly popular with the students and are all free to attend. We also have Learning Passports that allow us to reward students for time they spend in extra-curricular activities and which are extremely popular.

For Key Stage 3 students we offer:

- The Learning Resources Centre is open every morning from 8am for students to use the ICT facilities, read or to exchange their reading books.
- Homework Club
- A calm, supervised environment in the Learning Resource Centre allows students to do their homework using College resources and computers. This is held every day 3 - 4pm.
- Most subjects also offer an activity either at lunchtime or after school for students to extend their learning and receive extra guidance from the teaching staff. These may include:
- Creative Activities
- Music, street dance, drama and guitar are amongst those activities offered for students who feel stronger and more confident in creative activities.
- Opportunities to pursue particular interests for example chess, Computing, Art.

A wide variety of sports are offered for all students. They may be single or mixed sex, competitive or non-competitive situations.

We also offer a Paired Reading Scheme where older students work alongside Year 7 students to improve reading skills.

In addition to the daily activities outlined above students are also offered many other opportunities and activities that are offered at different times throughout the year.

All of our activities are publicised to the students by various means including on the Plasma Screens located throughout the College and also on the College website.