

Curriculum Vision: Politics

Why should students learn your subject?

It's important – politics helps students to understand the country they live in and how decisions are made and enforced within it.

It's interesting - It helps students make sense of current affairs and gain a more complete understanding where power lies and how political decisions are reached.

It helps develop skills – Whichever route students take beyond A level, politics helps students to analyse and evaluate the strength of different arguments. By assessing evidence and using examples it helps students to develop, present and defend their own views and actions. The key assessment objectives are relevant to almost every aspect of life.

It's relevant – the subjects we study are constantly evolving as our own political system does so students are well informed. The use of examples in their written work means students are not just learning theoretical positions but can also apply this to what is happening in the news.

What is the core knowledge in your subject that all students should understand?

The content is broken down into three key areas:

1. The government and politics of the UK
2. The government and politics of the USA and comparative politics
3. Political ideas

For each topic area we build in time for consolidation of learning as well as comparisons where relevant. Each part of the course is equally weighted.

What do students do with their knowledge to demonstrate their understanding?

Subject knowledge tests – Increasingly we check understanding of key terms and factual knowledge through short answer tests. Sometimes this is done less formally through quizzes.

Questioning – Regular lessons necessarily involve significant output from students in the form of questioning by teachers and at times each other. This challenges students to demonstrate their understanding by explaining areas of the course and using examples to illustrate how it works in practice.

Debate and discussions – Discussions are commonplace and keep students focused and engaged. Sometimes more formal debates and 'verbal boxing' can be used to test not just the arguments they make but how to counter alternative arguments using knowledge and examples.

Essays – An important way to assess knowledge and understanding is through extended writing. Essays play a part in all three written papers so from an early stage in Y12 students are taught how to structure and develop a formal written response to a question. Gradually scaffolding is reduced so that students can learn how to most effectively explore arguments and develop their own judgements.

Practice papers – There are now a number of past papers and a good new textbook with exam style questions to further prepare students for exams. These happen regularly with regular assessment points throughout the year culminating in A level exams.