



# Year 8 Curriculum 2025/26

At Dunottar we want to add value to every pupil so that, no matter what a child's individual abilities are, they are challenged and supported to develop a love of learning and to be prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Our Warrior Learner concept encourages our pupils to embrace the behaviours of aspiration, tenacity, curiosity, creativity, collaboration, inclusivity and independence. Lessons are designed to allow pupils to display these behaviours and reporting at KS3 refers directly to these.

Lessons are well-paced, challenging and fun. Within the curriculum each pupil is encouraged to achieve his/her full potential. The curriculum aims to educate the whole person through creative thinking and creative learning and the curriculum at Dunottar School extends far beyond the classroom and is enriched by a wide range of co-curricular activities.

On the following pages you will find an overview of the topics covered in each subject during Year 8.

## English

In Year 8, pupils build on the knowledge and skills that they acquired in Year 7. We broaden their studies by introducing a broader range of texts.

In Year 8, pupils study the following:

- Modern drama
- A Shakespeare play
- Modern prose
- Gothic and supernatural poetry through time
- Modern nonfiction
- Oracy: a public speaking competition

As reading underpins the curriculum, we continue to encourage wider reading through Sparx Reader, an online reading platform designed to improve students' literacy skills and encourage a love for reading.



## Mathematics

In Year 8, pupils develop their knowledge and skills in many of the areas studied in Year 7; learning formal written methods and efficient calculator methods. In addition, they also study:

- Indices
- Linear equations & graphs
- Ratio and proportional reasoning
- Composite shapes
- Circles
- Volume and 3D visualisation

All pupils in the year group have their maths lessons at the same time and are taught in ability sets. All sets follow the same flow of topics meaning that pupils can easily move from one set to another to maximise their learning. In the spring term, a large number of pupils have the opportunity to compete in the Junior Maths Challenge, a national competition, and a selected few will also compete in the UKMT team challenge. Each pupil has access to Sparx, an online homework and independent learning platform. All homework will be set using this intuitive program with follow up support, or stretch and challenge tasks created from their homework responses.

## Science

In Year 8 we continue with our own key stage 3 curriculum and build on skills learnt in Year 7.

Pupils are taught in mixed ability classes—4 lessons per week and continue to be taught Biology, Chemistry and Physics in blocks. Activities designed to promote thinking skills in science are continued in appropriate contexts throughout the year.

In Year 8 the topics covered include:

### Biology

- Healthy Bodies and Plants

### Chemistry

- Chemical reactions and Using chemical reactions

### Physics

- Waves, Electricity and Effect of forces

## Geography

Geography continues to focus on enquiry and asking questions about the world around us. 'What makes an ecosystem unique?' begins the Autumn term with a look at global biomes down to local ecosystems. A fieldwork enquiry is conducted in the school grounds to investigate the temperate deciduous woodland on our doorstep and how the density of the canopy can affect the temperature, humidity and light intensity. Global ecosystems focus on the 'To what extent is our earth delicately balanced?' culminating in a study of the Amazon rainforest and the threats and opportunities presented by its exploitation. Cause and effect are investigated and pupils are encouraged to think about possible outcomes and consequences for different decisions which will be referred to and applied to various contexts through the course. 'Why is the world's population changing?' is studied through investigating population growth, distribution and migration. Pupils will be challenged to explain why Donald Trump wanted to build a wall between the USA and Mexico and will investigate the data of migration routes through both legal and illegal routes.

We then look at 'How does water shape the land?' by looking at river hydrology and landforms

## Foreign Languages

### Spanish:

In Spanish, pupils review and extend the basics acquired the previous year and extend their vocabulary and increase their grammatical knowledge and application through topics such as technology, holidays, school, and sport. They will also learn more about Hispanic culture, looking at differences between Spanish speaking countries and complete cultural projects.

### French:

In French, pupils review and extend the basics acquired the previous year and extend their vocabulary and increase their grammatical knowledge and application through topics including personality, likes/dislikes, music, technology, hobbies, and food. They will start to use all three tenses and be introduced to reflexive verbs, intensifiers, and time phrases. Lessons focusing on Francophone culture also allow pupils to broaden their cultural knowledge of French speaking countries around the globe.

## History

The History curriculum is based on a series of enquiry questions. In Year 8, we cover aspects of history from 1500-1900 and these questions are:

Pupils will be taught the following enquiry units:

Enquiry 1: Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots – how did two powerful women become rival Queens for the English throne?

Enquiry 2: How did Miranda Kaufmann uncover the hidden lives of Black Tudors?

Enquiry 3: Was England turned ‘upside down’ in the C17th?

Enquiry 4: Was the Industrial Revolution a ‘Liberty’s Dawn’?

Enquiry 5: How did people campaign for greater political equality in the C19th and early C20th?

Enquiry 6: Did the history of Africa begin with the slave trade?

These topics are explored through the use of source evidence encouraging the pupils to consider ‘How do we know these things?’ and also considering whether changes were necessarily to the benefit of all those involved.

## Religious Studies

The Year 8 curriculum offers pupils the possibility to improve and build on the academic and thinking skills that have been embedded in Year 7. The curriculum offers a more thematic approach to the study of Religion, and Philosophy will be studied for the first time.

Unit 1 - Heroes: Pupils will look at and engage with a variety of religious and secular heroes. They will understand key concepts such as sacrifice, love, and forgiveness through the study of heroic lives.

Unit 2 - What does it mean to be a Muslim in the modern world? This unit will help pupils understand the belief systems of Islam. What are the main cornerstones of the faith? What do Muslims believe, and how do they practise their faith? Pupils will also examine some of the more difficult areas, such as terrorism and the Islamic response to it.

Unit 3 - Ultimate Questions: This is a philosophical and ethical unit based around the most important and poignant questions in life.

Questions include:

- Can we prove God’s existence?
- What is the meaning of life?
- Is there a correct way to live our lives?
- How do we make moral decisions?

Unit 4 - Sikhism: This unit will help students understand the concept of identity. It will look at what it means to be Sikh and address what Sikh identity is in Britain today.

The course will be expanded through the ‘Spirited Arts’ competition. Pupils will complete an Extended Learning Opportunity on what it means to be a Muslim in the modern world. Furthermore, students have the chance to visit a Mosque and a Mandir.

## Art & Design

Art & Design observational drawings using varied media will be the basis of the first unit of work, allowing pupils to experiment with shape, form, texture, pattern, colour and scale. Further skills will be developed in the creation of 3D work and printmaking through the themes of natural forms. Pupils are also introduced to ‘abstraction’ and sculptural forms. Pupils continue to develop their understanding of art history and critical thinking; this is then created to inspire pupils in their own work. Sketchbooks continue to be created to plan, evaluate and develop ideas alongside studio-based work.

## Three-Dimensional Design

Three-Dimensional Design is on a half-yearly rotation with Food & Nutrition. In Year 8, the first project is a "Day of the Dead" themed E-Textiles module where pupils design and make a flashing LED fabric decoration using sewable electronic components and conductive thread. The second project focusses on user-centred design, where pupils will carry out a variety of group-based activities, analysing existing products and carrying out a variety of designing and making tasks.

## Food & Nutrition

In Year 8, pupils will study a unit called “Healthy Kids Cook”. The course focuses on developing enjoyment and the love of good food. The pupils cook a range of well balanced and tasty dishes that encourage good nutrition as well as developing a wide range of practical skills. Dishes include breakfast burrito, fried rice, porcupine meatballs. Pupils will also learn about the macronutrients and the functions of each nutrient in the body. We also look at planning and understanding how to eat a balanced diet. As well as looking at scientific properties of ingredients, for example, the process of gelatinisation in making a roux-based sauce. Pupils will also complete an independent cooking task based on a 5-a-day challenge.

## Computing

In Year 8 we challenge pupils to think about the question 'what happens when you type in a web address and press enter...how does the website appear on your screen?' We discover how the internet works and then go on to explore how websites are programmed using HTML. Pupils enjoy the creativity of creating web graphics and celebrate the achievement of coding their own pages. Sphero BOLT is an app-enabled robotic ball and a valuable teaching tool. Programming with the Spheros provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to learn many fundamental programming concepts in an interactive and engaging way. Pupils also learn about broader issues with computing in the modern world such as how encryption works and how technology affects our privacy. They also continue to learn about key programming constructs through creating a "chatbot" in Python.

## Drama

In Year 8 pupils start by studying the non-naturalistic practitioners, Brecht and Berkoff this will allow them to consider the effectiveness of different styles and genres. This scheme has a focus on social and political theatre and how it can shape the world, which prepares them for devising at GCSE. Following this, the pupils will study *The Woman in Black* by Susan Hill and explore how lighting, set and sound can be used to create atmosphere, location and the supernatural. Finally, Year 8 will revisit the system introduced by Stanislavski, studied in year 7, whilst exploring extracts from *Blood Brothers* by Willy Russell. This will guide them to create believable performances and emotional characters and give them a taste of a GCSE level text.

## Music

In Year 8, pupils continue to develop their appraising, composing, and performing skills in a variety of ways. Pupils still develop their keyboard skills alongside learning the ukulele. Pupils are also encouraged to actively take part in music making by bringing their own instruments into lessons where appropriate. Singing still holds an important focus within the curriculum and these skills will be developed throughout the year. Pupils continue to deepen and broaden their knowledge of various musical concepts through concept-based learning where they learn about different styles of music all whilst having access to a knowledge rich curriculum.

Pupils in Year 8 learn about:

**Tonality and Structure:** Pupils will learn about the concept of tonality through learning about scales; major and minor; pentatonic and chromaticism. Pupils will continually apply this knowledge through the study of different genres of song and music such as classical and pop. Throughout this topic, pupils will regularly develop their keyboard skills by playing different excerpts of the pieces studied to embed the knowledge that they have learnt. Across the term, pupils will also learn about different structures within music, such as binary, ternary, rondo and theme and variations, having a go at composing their own.

**Developing Musicianship:** Pupils will have the opportunity to develop their skills as a musician through playing the keyboard and the ukulele. Throughout this topic, pupils learn about what makes a good musician, and how to play as part of an ensemble. These skills are taught through various songs, focusing on the music of Reggae, Ska and Mento. Pupils will learn about the history of the music and the musical features that make this music what it is. Pupils will learn various chord structures and how to play these as part of an ensemble, creating their own bands.

**Music in America:** This unit of work provides contextual setting for much of the development of contemporary popular music, tracing the development of black music in America through listening, appraising and performance, including ragtime, Dixieland, Blues and jazz. The pupils will have the opportunity to develop their instrumental skill alongside new knowledge acquisition. The lessons are designed to develop broader musical understanding through understanding of context, alongside the 'feel' of the music in performance.

## Physical Education

Physical Education During Key Stage 3 the pupils follow a programme which includes rugby, football and cricket for the boys and netball, football and cricket for the girls. Swimming is half-termly for all pupils in the Autumn and Spring term, whilst athletics is embedded into the Summer PE rotations in preparation for athletics events and sports day. Within weekly 'PE' lessons pupils will complete 6-week blocks of Physical Activity. We cover a broad range of activities throughout our 'PE' curriculum and within each activity we bed in GCSE PE terminology, so we are building a strong foundation and understanding of sport (tactical and technical) and physical activity from Year 7 through to Year 9 when pupils chose their GCSE options.

All of our 'PE' lessons are geared up to help pupils identify how to live a healthy and active lifestyle through the participation of sport and physical activity. Throughout the PE and Games lessons, pupils will experience different roles, such as coaching and officiating too, to develop their communication and leaderships skills. Co-curricular clubs run during both lunchtimes and after school for both competitive and recreational activities with fixtures taking place during the week and on Saturday mornings.

## PSHEE/RSE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education and Relationships and Sex Education)

PSHEE is taught as a timetabled lesson by allocated members of staff with a number of the themes being followed up in Assemblies, with outside speakers and in form times. The pupils follow a progressive course which builds on topics over the years.

Topics covered in Year 8 include: Digital Literacy, Discrimination, Drugs and Alcohol Awareness, Wellbeing and the Political System.

Staff specialise in an area of delivery with the result being an expertise amongst the staff in approaching sometimes challenging topics. We ensure full coverage of RSE and the statutory expectations of the government guidance. As part of the PSHEE programme, pupils also follow a varied Careers programme where they investigate changing trends in the world of work, discuss the role of various jobs in society and practise negotiating skills to solve a problem.

## Outdoor Education

At Dunottar School, our Outdoor Education programme is a powerful extension of our academic curriculum, using **practical bushcraft skills** to forge the Warrior Learning Traits of Aspiration, Creativity, Curiosity, Tenacity, Independence, Collaboration and Inclusivity. It is through the focused discipline of **bushcraft**—the art of thriving in the natural world—that our students build tangible skills and personal resilience. By mastering hands-on challenges like building shelters, sourcing materials, and managing a fire, they develop profound **tenacity** and **creativity**. Their **curiosity** is awakened as they learn to read the landscape, identify flora and fauna, and discover solutions using what nature provides.

Every **bushcraft** activity is a lesson in character. Navigating woodland trails fosters **independence** and confidence, while essential team tasks like constructing a camp or cooking outdoors demand deep **collaboration** and **inclusivity**, teaching students to listen, lead, and support one another.

Outdoor Education at Dunottar, facilitated by authentic **bushcraft** experience, inspires Warrior Learners—equipped with practical capabilities, a reflective mindset, and the confidence to succeed not only in the classroom but for life.

Subject	Lessons/fortnight	Subject	Lessons/fortnight
Maths	6	Games	4
English	6	General Science:	8
Library	1	Biology	
History	3	Chemistry	
Geography	3	Physics	
RE	3	PSHEE & RSE	2
French	3	Drama	3
Spanish	3	Computing	3
Art	3	Music	3
Food/DT	4	Outdoor Education	1
PE	2		