

The Law Curriculum

The curriculum has been designed around the purpose of providing students with a wider knowledge of the law. Students are provided with the opportunity to explore the morality and societal changes that continue to influence the law. Within each curriculum programme, students are taught how to analyse and assess the law within various different scenarios. They also build on their skills of evaluation, identifying areas of injustice within modern day law. Students have very little prior knowledge of the subject and therefore the course is planned around the development of their knowledge and skills through both their written and verbal work. This has been the foundation of both the A level and BTEC curriculums.

The use of mock trials, the creation of professional documents and talks from professionals currently working within the industry are regularly incorporated into the daily teaching in order for students to get a better understanding of the variety of different career paths.

Students are provided with summer tasks to complete prior to starting their course. This provides them with a valuable insight into the different areas that they will be studying and the skills that they will need to develop. At this point students are also made aware of any areas that will be covered that may be upsetting such as fatal offences, sexual assaults and domestic violence. Tasks include identifying key terminology that are the building blocks for law such as the meaning of the terms 'liability', 'claimant' and 'defendant'. They are then given short extracts from the law on non-fatal offences and negligence. Each student is then provided with a short scenario and questions to get them thinking about how to identify issues in scenarios and be able to apply the correct law to these issues.

A level law

The first topics that are covered include Law Making and the English Legal System. These two topics also make up the foundation for everything that they will cover over the two years. The topics start with an introduction to the key civil and criminal court structures and includes the different pathways and types of hearings that each type of case will have to follow. They are also given the opportunity to learn about how cases in both sets of courts are appealed, the reasons for appeal and the different judges that will hear those appeals. We will often try and link these topics to current events for example *R(Miller) v The Prime Minister (2019)* which demonstrated the use of a leapfrog appeal where the case involved an issue of national importance. Legal Personnel then follows on from this topic where students are provided with an opportunity to learn about the different legal professions and the different routes that are available into these professions. We will often incorporate talks from local professionals who will discuss their experiences of entering the law profession. This also offers students the opportunity to gain work experience within local firms.

Other topics that are covered at the outset of the two years are law making within Parliament and by the judiciary. It is crucial that students are able to learn how every law is created through the use of statutory law, common law or by delegated legislation. They are able to explore how laws are created via these different routes as well as evaluate the wider topics around laws such as government and politics. Each year we will try to incorporate a day trip to Parliament in order for the students to see for themselves the process of debate and scrutiny. During this trip they are also offered the opportunity to create their own law. The trip also includes some time in the Old Bailey where students are able to witness criminal trials taking place and be able to gain a greater insight into the role of the jury, judiciary and barristers.

Following these topics the students are then introduced to tort and criminal law. The key legal principles and terminology are revisited. Students are then gradually introduced to the core legal rules that are the foundation for each of the topics. They are able to build on their legal knowledge for each topic. From this they are then taught how to identify relevant evidence from scenarios and apply their legal knowledge to it. The students are taught how to use statutory and common law when working through the individual strands of a criminal offence or tort. Throughout both topics the students are able to take an active role in their learning including role plays of different cases or scenarios that they must apply the law to. They will also be given mock trials to be able to develop both their knowledge and advocacy skills. These types of activities also provide them with opportunities to develop their teamwork and leadership skills.

In the second year the students start by completing any remaining criminal law topics from the previous year. This also provides them with an opportunity to revisit the previous year's learning. Once this is complete they are then able to start their final paper 3 topics which include the nature of law and human rights law. Human rights law is the optional unit that was chosen as we wanted students to gain a wider understanding of current issues. Within this unit we are able to tackle current issues and how the law of human rights applies to them. Some of the recent topics we have studied and discussed in lessons include the pandemic, the Black Lives Matters Movement, transgender rights in the UK and elsewhere. We've also been able to look at recent political events and their implications on the right to article 10 and freedom of the press. Alongside this unit the students are also taught nature of law which involves exploring some of the key theorists who created a number of theories behind law and morality including Hart and Devlin. They are then taught how to apply these theories to real life cases to identify whether morality influences the law or the law influences morality. Law and justice is another topic where the students are able to investigate famous miscarriages of justice such as Stephen Lawrence and the Birmingham 6. They are then able to discover how these types of miscarriages of justice have influenced different theories. As these topics cover quite sensitive material, students are encouraged to tackle them with maturity and without prejudice. It's crucial for students to have a greater awareness of the wider world before they leave school and both of these units allow them to keep up-to-date with current issues and encourage further reading.

BTEC Applied law

Similar to A level law the first topic areas that are covered with the students include Dispute Solving in Civil law and Investigating Aspects of Criminal Law and the Legal System. These include topics which are the foundation for all of law and are both worth a quarter of the overall credits required for the Extended Certificate. Both units are taught alongside each other but are assessed differently. For Dispute Solving in Civil Law the students will sit a controlled assessment at the end of year 12.

Students are given the opportunity to look at the structure of the civil courts and how claims can be made through the use of alternative dispute resolution. Similar to A level they are also taught how law can also be made through judicial precedent. Finally they complete the topic looking at the law on negligence which is an area of tort law. Throughout the teaching of this topic students are taught the content using more practical methods. This could include the use of mock trials to demonstrate how civil cases take place. The students will be given the opportunity to explore how evidence is presented by both sides and how a judge will come to their decision based on the weighting of evidence. They are also taught how to begin their claim by filling in the relevant legal forms and creating working documents such as file notes and professional client letters. This is a key part of their learning as their assessment requires them to complete professional documents such as these.

Investigating Aspects of Criminal law and the Legal System is taught alongside the above unit in year 12. Students begin this unit by exploring how laws are made through various different ways. These include Statutes through Parliament, by judges through the use of statutory interpretation and by other agencies through the use of delegated legislation. They are then also taught about the impact of EU law and more recently the effect on our laws since our departure from the EU. Their learning is then assessed through the completion of their first written assignment. As part of this assignment students are taught legal research and referencing skills. They have to decide upon an area of law that they have a particular interest in and be able to research how that law was created through Parliament.

Finally, they are able to learn the general elements of criminal law such as the rules on actus reus and mens rea. They are then taught the law of non-fatal offences and how to apply the law to various different scenarios. This is again taught using practical methods such as role play where the students can act out different situations or cases and work together to consider how the law would apply.

The Year 13 topics were structured slightly differently this year. This was due to the impact of covid on the year 12 students as their controlled assessment was cancelled. This meant that assessments had to be carried out over a longer period of time by ourselves. As a result of this the students are studying their optional unit which is internally assessed alongside their controlled assessment unit. This year we are able to return to our normal structure for year 13. Students will begin their optional unit at the end of year 12 and this is then completed by the end of the Autumn term. They are then able to just focus on their external assessment unit in preparation for their controlled assessment in May. We felt that it was crucial for the students to have more time and focus placed on this particular unit as it has the largest amount of content and carries the biggest weighting for the Extended Certificate.

The internal assessment unit is Aspects of Family law. This has proven to be the most popular topic each year as they are given the option of Aspects of Family law or Aspects of Tort. Feedback from the students has been that they felt that this topic was more useful due to their own experiences. Some have experienced parents that have divorced and found it very interesting to look at how the courts and mediation come to their decisions on contact and financial orders. The students complete two assignments as part of this unit. The first assignment looks at the process of creating marriage, same-sex marriage, civil partnership or cohabitation agreements. They are then able to explore the breakdown of these relationships and how they are ended legally. Some important issues are covered here including the development of same-sex marriage but also how there are still inconsistencies and some unfairness within the law between heterosexual and same sex couples. Their final assignment includes financial, property and contact orders that can be put in place after the breakdown of a relationship. Again, they are able to research certain issues surrounding this area of law and in particular about how the child's interests are paramount in any court decision. For both of these assignments, students are required to complete professional client letters and written reports. They are also given the opportunity to produce an article evaluating the areas of law. As part of these they are able to look at various legal journals to explore the structure and format of such an article.

Once the optional unit is complete, students are then able to focus solely on their controlled assessment unit which is Applying the Law. This unit is worth a third of the overall credits required and therefore has the biggest weighting. The students are able to cover topics including fatal offences, property offences, Police powers and defences. Topics such as corporate manslaughter, fraud and criminal damage that are included within these topics are not taught on the A level

curriculum. The students are able to explore and learn about current cases that have taken place in the courts or media to look at how these laws apply. An example of this is the Grenfell Tower disaster where students were able to look at how the law of corporate manslaughter might apply. The students have been able to follow the ongoing investigation into the tragedy.