



Our Curriculum

Our vision

Stromness Academy aims to be a positive and purposeful place, of which all in our community are proud to be part. We encourage all our pupils to take responsibility for their learning and to aim high. To support this, we provide a wide range of opportunities to inspire pupils to find their passion, make positive life choices and fulfil their potential – both in and out of the classroom.

We value Orkney's unique location, culture and history, while promoting an understanding and awareness of the wider world. We aim to support all our young people to become confident and valued members of society who are responsible, respectful and resilient.



Our Curriculum Rationale

We aim to inspire young people to want to learn, and equip them with the skills and self-motivation to do so effectively. Our curriculum provides breadth and depth, support and challenge. It is flexible to meet individual needs and allow personalisation and choice, along with a rigorous focus on the key areas of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. We aim to prepare young people for modern life and work, in Orkney and beyond. Every pupil should leave us with skills, abilities and qualifications appropriate to their potential, enabling them to move on to a sustained positive destination.

Our Curriculum – a brief overview

Our curriculum must meet national requirements, but there is flexibility to make decisions at a school and county level to meet the needs of our learners and community and to draw on the experience and expertise of staff. During 2017-18, Stromness Academy developed a new Vision and Curriculum Rationale in consultation with parents, pupils and staff. The Vision sets out our overall aims, whilst the Curriculum Rationale lays out the principles which guide decisions we make on the subjects and other experiences we offer our pupils and the way we structure young people's time as they move up the school. This document sets out the resulting curriculum.

S1-3 – the Broad General Education phase (BGE)

Our **S1 and S2** curriculum focuses on breadth: pupils study a wide range of subjects, to give them a core set of skills and allow them to discover which areas they enjoy and do well in.

As pupils move into **S3**, they are able to begin to make choices to structure their time in school to suit their strengths and interests. The curriculum remains broad, but pupils can use choices to begin to specialise in some areas.

S4-6 – the Senior Phase

In S4-6 pupils study for national qualifications, with room for up to 6 qualifications per year in their timetable. In line with the Curriculum Rationale, we prioritise personalisation and choice, alongside a focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. English and Maths are compulsory in S4; beyond this we give pupils free choice of the courses they wish to take, and build the timetable around their choices. A key principle is:

Right Subject – Right Level – Right Time

Pupils are able to choose the subjects that suit their skills, interests and aims, at the level which suits their ability or the entrance requirements of their planned next step, at *any time throughout S4-6*. In S4, the majority of pupils study at National 5 or National 4 level, but pupils with appropriate ability may take Highers in S4 if they wish. Similarly, in S5-6, the majority of pupils study at Higher or Advanced Higher level, but it is equally possible to take a National 5, for instance to broaden skills or because a newly decided upon career aim demands it.

In **S4**, all pupils study English and Mathematics, plus 4 further subjects of their choice. The "Orkney Offer" means pupils can choose courses taught at other campuses within Orkney, primarily at Orkney College, giving a wide range of options.

Pupils who stay at school for **S5 and S6** take up to 6 further courses each year, appropriate to their planned next steps after school. Most university degrees require 5 qualifications at Higher, with qualifications at Advanced Higher recommended for those aiming at more competitive degrees. All the National 4/5 options available in S4 remain open to S5 and 6 pupils. In addition, there is the opportunity to take a Foundation Apprenticeship, combining work experience with related academic study. Also available are modules from HNC and degree programmes with University of the Highlands and Islands, giving senior pupils a taste of study beyond school level whilst still in school, and a range of Wider Achievement Programmes including work experience and leadership qualifications.

Please see the school website for full details of all courses currently available and more information on the course choice process.

Curriculum Structure – BGE Phase

The BGE (Broad General Education) curriculum at Stromness Academy aims to give a foundation in a wide range of subjects. It meets the national requirements of Curriculum for Excellence¹ which requires that pupils follow a broad curriculum covering eight areas of study:

Expressive arts Languages (including English, Gaidhlig/Gaelic and Modern Languages)
 Health and wellbeing Religious and Moral Education
 Mathematics Sciences
 Social studies Technologies

It also meets the entitlements to language learning set out in the “1+2 approach”.²

The 33 period school week is split across curriculum areas as follows:

S1	S2	S3
English 4 periods	English 4 periods	English 4 periods
Maths 4 periods	Maths 4 periods	Maths 4 periods
Modern Languages 3 periods equally split French/German	Modern Languages 2 periods major language, 1 period minor	Modern Languages 2 periods major language, 1 period minor
Science 3 periods	Science 3 periods	Science Choice 2 periods
Geography 2 periods	Geography 2 periods	Social Subject Choice 2 periods
History 2 periods	History 2 periods	Expressive Art Choice 2 periods
Art 2 periods	Art 2 periods	Technology Choice 2 periods
Music 2 periods	Music 2 periods	Additional Choice 1 2 periods
Business 1 period	Business 1 period	Additional Choice 2 2 periods
Computing 1 period	Computing 1 period	Additional Choice 3 2 periods
Technology 2 periods	Technology 2 periods	Additional Choice 4 2 periods
Home Economics 2 periods	Home Economics 2 periods	Modern Studies 1 period
Physical Education 2 periods	Physical Education 2 periods	Physical Education 2 periods
Religious Education 1 period	Religious Education 1 period	Religious Education 1 period
PSE 1 period	PSE 1 period	PSE 1 period
Activities 1 period	Activities 1 period	Activities 1 period

¹ [https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence?](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence?)

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/language-learning-scotland-12-approach/pages/13/>

Curriculum Structure – Senior Phase

Senior Phase provides the opportunity for pupils to create a personalised timetable consisting of subjects which meet their needs, interests and career aims, and are studied at a level appropriate to their abilities.

Pupils in S4 are required to study English and Maths and pupils in S5/6 who have not yet gained National 5 English and/or Maths are strongly recommended to continue to study these subjects; beyond this, pupils have free choice of subjects, subject to choosing sufficient options for a full timetable. Two lessons of PE per week is a national requirement up until the end of S4; options for physical activity within school are offered to S5/6 pupils but are no longer compulsory. It is common for pupils in S5/6 to include an element of private study time and/or work experience within their timetable.

A wide range of subjects are on offer, some taught at Stromness Academy and some at other campuses, and at qualification levels from National 4 to Advanced Higher and beyond. The majority of pupils in S4 will be studying at National 5 or 4 level, with the majority of S5 pupils studying at Higher level, but pupils can mix courses and levels in any school year.

The 33 period school week is split as follows:

S4	S5/6
English 4 periods	Choice 1
Maths 4 periods	
Choice 1 5 periods	Choice 2
Choice 2 5 periods	Choice 3
Choice 3 5 periods	Choice 4
Choice 4 5 periods	Choice 5
Physical Education 2 periods	Choice 6
Religious Education 1 period	Private Study/PE 1 period
PSE 1 period	PSE 1 period
Activities 1 period	Activities 1 period

The Orkney Offer

The Orkney Offer is the name given to the principle that S4-6 pupils in Orkney have access to courses taught at any campus across the county. Groups of pupils from different year groups and from different schools come together to make up a class. This is a practical solution to the issues of desiring to offer Orkney pupils a rich curriculum within the means of a small county. It has the advantage that:

- A wider range of courses can be offered to pupils.
- Vocational courses requiring the specialised facilities and staff of Orkney College can be offered to pupils alongside traditional academic courses in schools.
- Minority interest subjects are more likely to have a viable number of pupils to allow the course to be run.
- Bi-level courses are less likely. This is an alternative solution to creating viable group sizes in minority interest subjects, and involves pupils taking different levels of course in the same subject being taught together in one group. Whilst it allows courses to run economically, it requires greater independent study skills of the pupils than a single level class.
- Pupils in S4 can benefit from the independence of a college environment before reaching school leaving age

The majority of Stromness Academy pupils who use the Orkney Offer as part of their timetable attend courses either at Orkney College in Kirkwall, or the Navigation School in Stromness. Course timings are agreed between the College, KGS and Stromness Academy to minimise the impact of travel time, but inevitably this results in some missed curriculum time in school. Pupils taking college courses must be prepared to study in their own time to catch up time lost from other subjects due to travel. They must also be prepared to travel in their own time, e.g making their own way to/from college at the beginning/end of the day, or travelling during the lunch break. Transport to/from college is provided where necessary but pupils are also provided with tickets to use the public bus service where timings make this feasible.

Timetable and transport permitting, Stromness Academy pupils may also use the Orkney Offer to take a course at Kirkwall Grammar School and vice versa. This is more likely to be logistically feasible in S6, when pupils generally have more flexibility in their timetable.