



Year 8: Curriculum Overview

Success, Support, Social Growth



“Developing complex and critical thinking”

Learning in year 8 is comparable to a detective moving from learning how to dust for fingerprints (Year 7 fundamentals) to analysing complex crime scenes, understanding psychological motives (duality, morality), tracking supply lines (systems like circulatory or river systems), and employing advanced competitive tactics (PE strategy) to solve major, high-stakes cases (global conflicts and societal injustices)

The Year 8 curriculum across various subjects demonstrates a transition from the foundational learning of Year 7 to a more **complex, critical, and systemic study** of major global and societal issues. The

core trends revolve around analysing **power structures, exploring human duality and societal injustice, and deepening the application of mathematical and scientific systems** to real-world scenarios.

Below we have outlined the common curriculum themes, knowledge and skills development that we believe will support our year 8 pupils in building and advancing their understanding across the subject disciplines.

1. Analysing Power, Corruption, and Human Duality

A significant trend in Year 8 is the intense focus on how power operates, the existence of conflicting narratives, and major instances of societal injustice throughout history.

- **Duality in Human Nature:** English centers its thematic focus for the year on **Duality**, explicitly **exploring how writers present ideas about duality in human nature**. This is examined through literary study:

- **The Complexity of Characters:** Students learn about **character duality and complexity** and the concept of a **reliable narrator** through texts like *Sherlock Holmes*.

- **Themes of Power and Oppression:** They study themes of **power, corruption, rebellion, communism, animalism, and propaganda** in *Animal Farm*. They also address concepts like **monarchy, treason, magic, and power** in *The Tempest*.

- **Societal Injustice and Conflict:** History directly confronts the consequences of unchecked power and social division:

- **Racial Inequality:** Students explore the significance of **racial equality** through the **Transatlantic Slave Trade**, investigating events like The Zong and assessing the **consequences and impact** of the trade.

- **Industrial Transformation:** They study the **rapid transformations** of the Industrial Revolution, focusing on the **experiences of children in the workplace**.

- **Global Conflict:** The curriculum covers the major conflicts of the 20th century, including World War I and World War II, examining **how millions lost their lives to defend their nation** and the events leading up to the **Holocaust**.

2. Transitioning from Fundamentals to Systems and Application

While Year 7 focused on establishing basic building blocks (like simple notation or the particle model), Year 8 focuses on describing and analysing integrated systems—both natural and man-made—and applying core knowledge through more complex calculations.

- **Complex Mathematical Structures:** In Maths, students extend foundational algebra to manipulation by **expanding and factorising** expressions. They learn how to form and solve **simple and complex equations and inequalities** and understand the **laws of indices**. They also apply geometry knowledge to find angles in **parallel lines and polygons**.

- **Dynamic Natural Systems:** Geography shifts from describing places to analyzing dynamic physical systems:

- **Rivers and Climate:** Students study **river processes and features** and strategies to protect from the risks of flooding. They also explain how **global circulation systems influence the weather**.

- **Global Interdependence:** They learn about the **complex interactions between ourselves and nature** in the Sustainable Living unit, focusing on mitigating climate change.

- **Biological and Physical Systems:** Science delves into detailed systemic studies:

- **Human Biology:** Students learn about the **human circulatory system** (heart and blood vessels), the **human digestive system** (including enzymes), and the processes of **ventilation and aerobic/anaerobic respiration**.
- **Chemistry and Physics:** They introduce the systemic study of **Acids and Alkalis** and **neutralisation**, and the fundamentals of **electricity** and **electrical circuits**.

3. Developing Critical Evaluation and Strategic Thinking

Year 8 emphasises moving beyond basic recall to critically assessing information, sources, and performance outcomes, particularly through rhetorical and competitive analysis.

- **Rhetorical and Literary Evaluation:** English teaches students about **Aristotle (ethos, logos, pathos)** and the links between Greek/Roman discourse and Shakespeare. This involves learning how to **plan and write for purpose and impact on a live audience**, requiring critical evaluation of audience and message.
- **Ethical and Guidance Evaluation:** RE moves toward analytical ethical inquiry, asking whether **religious books provide reliable advice for living well** and whether religious texts can provide **reliable guidance for ethical dilemmas**. This is approached using **philosophical, social science, and psychological lenses**.
- **Strategic Mastery and Coaching:** PE secures technical competence and elevates the focus to strategy. Students use a range of **tactics and strategies to overcome opponents in direct competition** across invasion, net/wall, and striking/fielding games. They also focus on the **application and evaluation of training methods** and improving peer performances through coaching.

4. Broadening Global and Historical Scope

The curriculum expands its scope dramatically in History and Geography, moving beyond the UK and Medieval focus of Year 7 to encompass global economic, environmental, and conflict contexts.

- **Global Development and Place:** Geography expands awareness of global issues through the study of **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and investigates place-based locations in **HICs, LICs and NEEs** (High-Income, Low-Income, and Newly Emerging Economies).
- **World Events and Context:** History covers events that fundamentally changed the global political landscape: World War I, the Interwar Years (economic highs and crashes in America/Europe), and World War II.
- **Adaptation to Environment:** Science introduces the major concept of **Adaptation and Evolution**, studying how animals and plants survive in diverse environments.