

SEVENOAKS SCHOOL

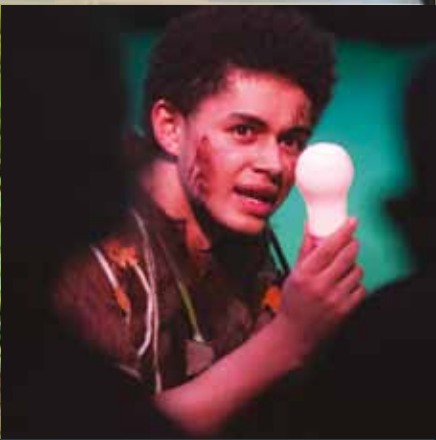


A Guide for Students



INTRODUCTION

Throughout your time at school you will learn about yourself, about others and the world in a large variety of ways. Much of this learning will take place within classrooms; however, a great deal will also happen outside those walls – through the co-curricular programme, school trips and excursions, and through day to day encounters with your peers and members of staff.



In a traditional educational model two assumptions are frequently made about the nature of learning. The first is the view that what happens in the classroom is distinct and detached from what happens outside, and the second is that academic study is more important than anything else because that is what leads to success in the future.

The Sevenoaks Middle School Diploma is designed to take account of this way of thinking about the school curriculum. You are invited to see it as an opportunity to record many different elements of school life that can sometimes go unnoticed, to develop personal qualities and attributes that make you a more fully rounded person, and to provide you with the means to learn more effectively.

Research shows that these assumptions are false. A more modern approach takes account of the ways intellectual, personal and emotional qualities are all interrelated: what happens outside the classroom is just as important as what happens inside, because one influences the other in a very significant way. Furthermore, successful people are increasingly defined in terms of things that are not measured by examination results: your ability to create, to work with others, to lead, empathise and show commitment will make a significant difference to how well you do at university and in the world of work.

The Diploma should not be seen as a demand to do more, but a way to understand the importance of the activities you engage with, and to reflect on the ways you learn through them. The end result might be to have tried things you had not thought of doing before, to develop a special passion for one thing in particular, or simply to give more recognition to the things you do anyway.

We hope you that find the Diploma enjoyable and fulfilling, and a useful means of support for all elements of your time in the Middle School.



KEY QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE DIPLOMA?

The Diploma asks you to make a formal record of your learning in the Middle School, both inside and outside the classroom. Provided you fulfil the core requirements, at the end of Year 11 you will be rewarded with a Diploma Certificate and a transcript that describes your journey through the Middle School years. Students who go consistently above and beyond the core requirements may qualify for a Diploma with Distinction.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Diploma works in two main ways. The first is as a record of any activity or experience that you would like to record as a document of your learning in different areas throughout the Middle School. The second is to participate in an activity over a period of time and to ask for it to be formally accredited by a particular teacher. The teacher will most likely be the person who runs the activity, but on some occasions it might be your tutor.

HOW LONG DOES THE DIPLOMA LAST?

The Diploma lasts throughout your time in the Middle School. You will probably find, however, that you have more time in Year 9 and to some extent Year 10, but less in Year 11 when your examination courses become a little more demanding. For this reason, our recommendation is that you focus on breadth in Years 9-10 and depth in Year 11. This means that you might choose to do more activities in Years 9-10, but develop your passions and interests in one or two areas in Years 10-11.

HOW DO I QUALIFY FOR THE DIPLOMA?

To qualify for the Diploma you need to have participated in at least one activity in each of the five categories described overleaf in Years 9 and 10. In Year 11 you are not required to participate in all areas and may, if you wish, focus on areas that are your particular passion. In order to achieve a Diploma with Distinction in one or more areas of activity you will need to show a sustained commitment to an activity (which is characterised by regular involvement over a period of time, usually a term) and to have written at least one meaningful reflection on your participation. These reflections will be read by your supervisor who will then accredit your participation. One of the categories, Academic Engagement, is part of the Middle School Curriculum: an assessment of your effort and commitment in the subjects you study, as well as your engagement with the Core Courses. You are not limited to only one activity in each category; you can undertake any number of activities and ask for any of them to be recognised officially by a teacher. When you complete the activities is up to you.

HOW AM I ACCREDITED?

As soon as you have decided that you would like an activity in which you have participated to be included officially as part of your Diploma, then you must approach the teacher you feel is best placed to provide you with feedback. Typically, this will be the person who has run the activity and who knows you best. The teacher will expect you to have reflected on the activity, the way you have contributed to it and what you feel you have learned from it. When this has happened, she or he will write a comment to acknowledge your effort and level of accomplishment.

WHICH ACTIVITIES WOULD COUNT?

Any activity that you do that is meaningful to you and that fits into one of the five areas of activity. It may be an activity you do in school or out of school. To fulfil the basic requirements of the Diploma you just need to have engaged in all five areas of activity (this may be a one-off activity or one that you participate in for a sustained period of time) in Years 9 and 10 and continued participation in either all or just some areas in Year 11. It is important that you have written at least one meaningful reflection on your participation each time.

Activities are grouped into the following five categories:

MAKING AND PERFORMING

SERVICE AND SOCIAL IMPACT

PHYSICAL AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION

ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

TUTOR RECOMMENDATION

HOW MIGHT I QUALIFY FOR A DIPLOMA WITH DISTINCTION?

A Diploma with Distinction is earned if you have consistently gone beyond the demands of particular activities and the criteria associated with them. Towards the end of Year 11, your tutor and Divisional Head will look through your list of achievements and make a decision based partly on the number of activities in which you have participated, but more in terms of the qualities you brought to them and developed through your time in the Middle School.

WHAT ARE THE ATTAINMENT CRITERIA?

In addition to the core values, each of the five categories of activity have statements of achievement associated with them. These describe qualities that we hope to see bring developed through your participation in the activity. You are invited to make reference to them when you reflect on how well an activity has gone, as will your teacher when she or he writes a final comment. Your teacher will also make a judgement as to how well you have either met or gone beyond them.

HOW DO I REFLECT?

When you have decided to choose a particular activity for inclusion in the Diploma, and have approached a teacher for accreditation, you should then navigate to the relevant page on the Diploma online site and enter some kind of reflection on the activity and your involvement in it. The reflection might describe ways in which you feel you have contributed, but also explore and evaluate qualities and/or skills you feel you have developed. The reflection could take the form of a written comment or a short uploaded video.

WHAT ABOUT 'NON-OFFICIAL' ACTIVITIES?

As mentioned above, the Diploma provides you with a means to reflect on the way you learn in and through elements not associated with traditional classroom teaching, but also – quite practically – to make a record of things that you have accomplished or simply been interested in during your time in the Middle School. The Diploma online site therefore has a place in which you can write comments, upload photographs or brief videos to do with any element of your time in the Middle School which you would like to preserve. You might see this as a kind of personal blog, or a transcript – a bit like an ongoing Curriculum Vitae.



QUALIFYING CATEGORIES



Categories of Diploma	Criteria	Examples
No award	Students who have not met the criteria below.	
Diploma	<p>Students have engaged in all five areas of activity. They must have engaged in all five areas at least once in all three years (Years 9 and 10).</p> <p>In Year 11 students are not required to engage fully in all areas equally and may, should they wish, focus on the areas of activity that are their particular passion.</p> <p>There is evidence of meaningful reflection in all five areas, ie at least one meaningful reflection has been written.</p> <p>Engagement may be a one-off or a sustained commitment.</p>	Diploma
Diploma with Distinction in a particular area of activity	<p>As above.</p> <p>In addition, students have shown sustained engagement in one or more area of activity (usually over a term) with evidence of meaningful reflection. At least one meaningful reflection is made.</p> <p>Students have gained accreditation (a supervisor review) on the quality of their participation.</p>	<p>Diploma with Distinction in Service and Social Impact</p> <p>Diploma with Distinction in Physical and Outdoor Education</p> <p>Diploma with Distinction in Making and Performing</p> <p>Diploma with Distinction in Academic Engagement</p>
Diploma with Distinction in all areas of activity	<p>As above.</p> <p>Students will qualify for a Diploma with Distinction in all areas if they have shown sustained engagement in all five areas of activity.</p>	Diploma with all-round Distinction

THE CATEGORIES

There are eight areas in which your activities in school can be categorised for accreditation:

MAKING AND PERFORMING

Activities in this area include those that encourage and develop creativity, whether individually or in a group. The three main areas of creative activity in our co-curricular programme are Music, Drama and Art. However, many school clubs also provide opportunities to create, make and perform.

Examples: Theatre productions (including acting, set design, technical design), music groups and ensembles, instrumental lessons, Ceramics Club, Film Making Club, Creative Writing Group.

SERVICE AND SOCIAL IMPACT

In Years 10 and 11 you may choose to take part in a service activity on Thursday afternoons. There are many options but all require you to devote your time, skills and effort to helping others, whether in our own school community, the local community or the wider world.

Examples: All VSU projects – primary schools, VSU art, Environment Society, Gamelan, VSU drama, Riding for the disabled, Valence School VSU, visiting the elderly, Charity Action Group, Thursday Club. You could also include Service elements of CCF.

PHYSICAL AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Sport, CCF and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme are included in the Physical and Outdoor Education category and are the most popular ways of participating, but a sustained commitment to a school club, such as running, dance or climbing, also provide opportunities for physical and outdoor education.

Examples: Sports teams and clubs, CCF, Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver Award.

ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

As explained above, this is one of two categories that are part of your Middle School curriculum (all your subjects including the Core Courses). Accreditation will occur in two ways: through recognition of your commitment and gains in grades over the three years; your own reflective comments that you make in response to your reports and assessments. Perhaps there is something in your subjects of which you are particularly proud – or a target you want to set yourself.

Achievement in this area is characterised by skills and attributes such as offering thoughtful contributions to discussion and listening actively to others, completing written work to the best of your ability, willingness to work and think independently, and perseverance when faced with a challenge.

TUTOR RECOMMENDATION

Some worthwhile activities or contributions will not fit into the other four categories but may still be accredited by your tutor under the Tutor Recommendation category.

Examples: Leadership or organisation of tutor group events or activities, such as Charity Week, volunteering to help in school events, organisation of and involvement in boarding house events, boarding house leadership roles, leadership of or assistance with a school society or club, support of peers at school events.



CORE VALUES

There are seven Core Values that we seek to nurture in the Middle School, and these underscore all elements of the curriculum and the activities with which you are engaged – whether inside or outside the classroom. They are defined as follows:

CREATIVITY

Students are encouraged to think imaginatively and to be adaptable. They try out different solutions and evaluate their strengths. They are encouraged to see existing situations in new and different ways.

INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Students learn to think for themselves. They develop a natural sense of curiosity and ask thoughtful questions. They acquire skills in research and enquiry. They learn how to manage their time and take responsibility for their own progress.

CRITICAL THINKING

Students acquire the ability to comprehend, analyse and synthesise information. They explore strengths and weaknesses of multiple answers and question assumptions. They argue points of information persuasively and learn to solve problems in different ways.

INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Students develop knowledge of ideas, issues and themes in a real world global context. They explore ethical, social and political contexts and the relationships between them. They identify ways in which notions of justice, tolerance and peace can be realised.

COLLABORATION

Students learn in collaborative, cooperative ways, both as leaders and as members of a team. They acquire effective communication skills and understand the importance of active listening. They learn to negotiate, compromise and show consideration for alternative points of view.

SELF-AWARENESS

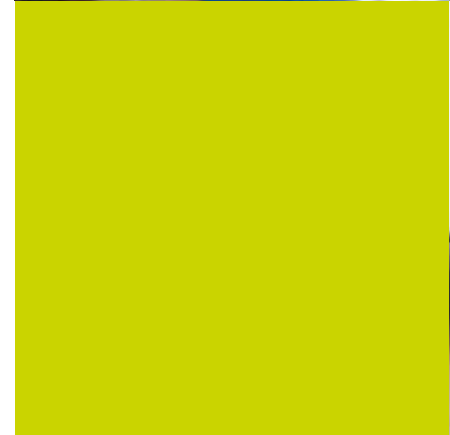
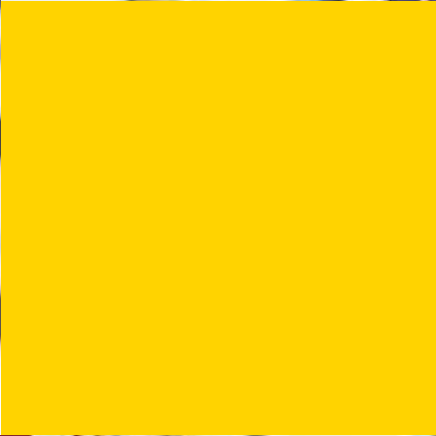
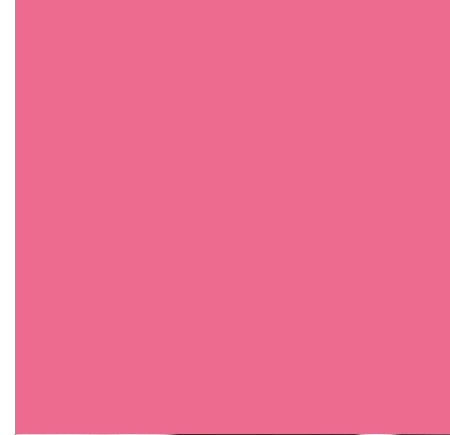
Students develop understanding of themselves and the way they learn. They learn to prioritise and to be resilient in the face of challenge. They aspire towards intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Students explore the implications of moral and ethical decisions. They acquire a principled, compassionate worldview and are sensitive to the needs of others. They exhibit honesty, personal responsibility and a sense of commitment in all areas of school life.

Each of the five Diploma categories has these qualities as underlying aims. However, it is true that each category will also place emphasis on some elements more than others.

When you reflect on your contributions and the way you have learned in each area, we expect you to refer to these kinds of qualities.



IN WHAT WAYS WILL I BE ASSESSED?

Assessment of your participation and achievement is done both by you and your teachers. You will make your own self-assessment through the reflections you write. The teacher supervising the activity can also be approached to write a 'supervisor review' on your participation.

When you ask a teacher to accredit you, she or he will make some kind of qualitative judgement about your involvement and your contribution to it. This judgement will reflect the ways in which you have demonstrated the kinds of skills and attributes listed above.

More practical examples of the ways you might demonstrate these are as follows:

ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT (INCLUDING CORE COURSES)

- Reading around a subject that particularly interests you or visiting a museum or gallery to further your knowledge.
- Offering thoughtful contribution to discussion and listening actively and sensitively to others.
- Being prepared to persevere and think through a problem in class.
- Being willing to share and adapt ideas when working with others on a shared project.
- Completing all written work and homework to the best of your ability.

MAKING AND PERFORMING

- A sense of determination and perseverance in wanting to improve creative or imaginative skills.
- Thoughtful, critical contributions to nurture the success of an activity.
- Regular attendance at a club, rehearsal or practice.
- Sensitive encouragement and support for the contributions made by others.
- A positive, constructive reaction to failure.





SERVICE AND SOCIAL IMPACT

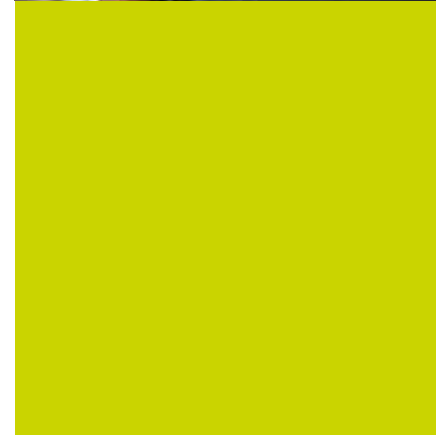
- Helping to initiate, organise and carry out an activity in your chosen VSU activity.
- Displaying a sense of empathy, sensitivity and care when working with others in a Service placement such as a primary school or home for the elderly.
- Planning and leading a session at your VSU placement, for example a sports lesson at a primary school.
- Delivering a presentation to others on your Service activity and what you have learnt in an assembly.

PHYSICAL AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION

- Attending all training sessions and matches for your sports team.
- Motivating others in your group on your Duke of Edinburgh expedition.
- Showing determination and resilience when faced with physical challenges in a sporting or outward-bound activity.
- Demonstrating a sense of fair play, respect and a positive attitude when playing competitive sport.
- Effective leadership in a CCF role.

TUTOR RECOMMENDATION

- Active participation in the Middle School Committee or other student groups.
- Supporting peers by attending school events such as drama productions and concerts.
- Actively organising and participating in the tutor group Charity Week event.
- Demonstrating reliable and effective leadership in captaining the tutor group Sports Day team.
- Leading a discussion on a current issue in your tutor group.



BEING REFLECTIVE

As you progress through the Middle School and engage with the activities in the different areas of the Diploma, you are encouraged to reflect both informally and formally on your experiences and learning. It is hoped that this process will help you become more aware of yourself, the way you learn, your strengths, and the things you need to do to make progress. Most of all, reflection is designed to help you develop as a learner and as a person.

HOW DO I REFLECT?

Reflection is a thoughtful process. It means to look at yourself; what you are 'thinking', 'doing' or 'being' at a particular time. You might reflect on what you have learnt in a lesson or activity and how you went about it, what you did well and what you found challenging, how you overcame those challenges and how you might learn differently in the future. The Core Values describe the main things we think are important skills and personal attributes. You might want to refer to them to help you reflect on your own.

HOW DO I RECORD MY REFLECTIONS?

You may record your reflections in different ways: in written comment, video, photographs, a mind map or some other form. You just need to upload your reflections to your ManageBac account. You do not need to reflect on every activity you do but you should try to choose experiences or activities that you found particularly interesting and illuminating, enjoyable, maybe challenging and therefore significant to you. The number of times you record a reflection is up to you. However, when you wish to be accredited for an activity, you must record at least one meaningful reflection.





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