Secondary education, or ‘Upper School’, begins at the end of class eight (year nine) when the children leave their Lower School Class Teacher. This new phase is one in which academic challenges and the need to think and work independently stands central.

Questions, discussion, criticism - all the activities of the enquiring mind - grow in strength. At this stage the curriculum aims to foster clear independent thinking. Pupils are encouraged to explore ideas that can lead them to find their own ideals, passions and interests. Wherever possible the pupils are taught by experts and specialist teachers. The task of all the teachers in this phase is to enable the unfolding of the inner being and individuality of the young person into an independent, capable and responsible adult.

Most of our schools combine the full Steiner curriculum with a selection of GCSE’s, A levels or other recognised equivalents in order to ease progression to further and higher education. Experience shows that Steiner pupils consistently produce examination results well above the national average and pupil’s progress to a wide range of universities and other tertiary education programmes.

Pupils leave school as well rounded and sociable individuals and with a broad range of skills and qualities that are valued by employers and admissions tutors at universities and colleges. (See Does Steiner Education Work?)

The Upper School curriculum

The breadth of the curriculum is a consistent feature: there is no premature specialisation, although opportunities will certainly be provided for students to build on their strengths and interests. All pupils continue with general subject lessons, including: languages, arts and crafts, religious studies, sports, drama and music. The Main Lessons can best be understood in the wider context that distinguishes each year:

- **In class 9, (year 10), the experience of polarities:**
  - the opposition of heat and cold in physics; in chemistry, the expansion and contraction of gases; in history, the conflicts and revolutions of recent history and the ways in which they have impacted on the modern age; in geography, the collision of plate tectonics and the upheavals of geomorphology; in literature, the extremes of comedy and tragedy.

- **In class 10, (year 11) reconciling the polarities:**
  - acids and bases in chemistry, the principles of mechanics in physics, the self-regulating processes of weather patterns in earth science, the play of masculine and feminine influences in embryology, and the intimate relationship of good and evil, hero and villain in world literature. Class 10 students are called upon to exercise powers of comparison, weighing in the balance contrary phenomena to determine their value and significance.

- **In class 11 (year 12) the ability to analyse:**
  - in chemistry, the invisible world of the atom, in physics, the invisible world of electricity, in life sciences, botany, in literature, the journey from sin to virtue and from selfish folly to compassion in classics such as Dante’s Divine Comedy and Eschenbach’s Parzival, and in history, the Renaissance, the Islamic World, and History through Music.

- **In class 12 (year 13) and the ability to bring it all together again...:**
  - history through Architecture, the Transcendentalists, Modern Literature, Contemporary Art, Calculus, Zoology, Optics; Biochemistry; Human Development and Consciousness.

Throughout these years class trips, frequently overseas, continue to play an important part in enriching the curriculum and the students’ experience. Drama and musical productions contribute in the same way and are all-inclusive: every student has a role in the class play, just as every student can have a role to play in a future of their generation’s making.