



**Amended: November 2015**

The Drakensberg Boys Choir School is a member of the Independent Schools Association of South Africa (ISASA). The academic affairs of the school are managed by the Head of Academics through the Academic Committee, comprised of academic teachers. This committee, which also includes the Head of Academics and the Executive Head, is effectively the Academic Board.

The committee meets weekly, under the chairmanship of the Academic Head and deals with all issues relating to the academic activities of the school. The body creates policies and ensures the adherence to those policies. The committee ensures that the academic programme for the year is properly planned and executed, including the assessment procedures, timing of assessments and the administration of mid and end-of-year assessments. It also ensures the maintenance of academic standards through the moderation of results reported on by each department member. Each subject is represented by a Subject Head who is responsible for maintaining standards and sound educational methodology in accordance with the demands of their learning area. An annual review of teaching and learning programmes, including decisions to be implemented to ensure improvements on a regular basis, are also secured by the committee.

## **1. Language Policy**

The primary language of learning and teaching (LoLT) at the DBCS is English. All pupils are therefore required to study English at a Home Language level. The DBCS, however, promotes bilingualism and hence offers pupils an opportunity of studying Afrikaans either as a Home Language, or as a First Additional Language. Summative assessments (examinations and cycle tests) for all non-language subjects, are provided in English and Afrikaans. Every effort is made by teachers to supply pupils with suitable learning material in English or Afrikaans.

The administration of the school is conducted in English.

## **2. Learning Programme Design**

### **2.1 The School Day**

The school day forms part of the DBCS Daily Routine, comprised of approximately twenty-two hours of academic contact time (this excludes tea-time, assembly, choir rehearsals and homeroom lessons) per week. Music subjects (Aural Training, Music Theory and Music Appreciation) form part of the academic curriculum. All academic classes are scheduled before lunch. The purpose of Saturday School is to allow for additional academic lessons and choir rehearsals, as well as an opportunity for educational enrichment – scheduled dates are available on the school calendar.

### **2.2 Curriculum Overview**

The DBCS is a unique school with a strong emphasis on music education. The primary focus in all spheres of the school is on excellence. For this reason, the Academic Committee has stream-lined the existing NSC curriculum to fit the needs of the DBCS pupils.

Through this curriculum we aim to produce students who:

- are equipped to identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking
- work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team
- can organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively
- have the necessary skills to pursue a career in music
- communicate effectively
- can utilise technology effectively
- critically show responsibility towards the environment and the well-being of others
- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The DBCS curriculum is CAPS-based and offers the following subjects:

### **Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 – 6)**

- English Home Language (incorporating Drama)  
R4C (Reading for Comprehension) – the emphasis in this programme is on reading for understanding and detail. This course is the responsibility of the IP English teachers.
- Afrikaans Home Language or Afrikaans First Additional Language
- Mathematics
- Natural Sciences & Technology
- Social Sciences
- Music: Music Appreciation, Music Theory & Aural Training

Visual Art, Physical Education and Well-being topics form part of the Junior DBCS Life Skills Programme (LSP). These subjects are assessed but are not examinable. Well-being topics are skills-based, such as study techniques and time management and others are value-based, such as dealing with bullying and relationships and are dealt with during Homeroom lessons with register teachers once a week. Coordination of the Life Skills programme is the responsibility of the Head of Academics.

### **Senior Phase (Grades 7 – 9)**

- English Home Language
- Afrikaans Home Language or Afrikaans First Additional Language
- Mathematics
- Natural Sciences: Biology & Physical Science
- Social Sciences: History & Geography
- Economic and Management Sciences: Accounting & Business Studies
- Music: Music Appreciation, Music Theory & Aural Training

Visual Art and components of the NSC Life Orientation curriculum form part of the Senior DBCS Life Skills Programme (LSP). This subject will be assessed but will not be examinable. Other LSP topics, some are skills-based (such as study techniques, time management, career guidance) and others are value-based (such as dealing with bullying and relationships, substance-abuse, legal matters), are dealt with during Homeroom lessons with register teachers. Coordination of the Life Skills programme is the responsibility of the Head of Academics.

The curricula for the Music subjects are set by The Artistic Director and the Music staff of the DBCS.

The six subjects in Grade 4 – 6 and the seven subjects in Grades 7 – 9, listed above, are all examinable.

### **3. Learning Programmes and Teaching Materials**

All teachers regularly review the teaching materials and programmes that they use. From time to time, the Academic Board will be expected, through each of the subject heads, to complete a review of its learning programme for the past year, for every grade, and to table the findings of this review to the committee at the last meeting of each year. These review findings are made available to the Executive (SMC) for incorporation into the annual review conducted by the Executive (SMC) for Quality Management Reports.

### **4. Information Technology**

The expectation exists that teachers should use information and communication technologies (ICT) for teaching and learning, as well as to enable pupils to acquire essential skills relating to IT, in order to be successful in the world at large. For this purpose, computers are available in the IT room for teacher and pupil use. All pupils have access to the school Wi-Fi for academic purposes. Grade 8 and 9 pupils are requested to be in possession of an electronic tablet. Pupils in other grades may use their own electronic devices to enhance learning – we encourage these pupils to utilise all devices responsibly and optimally.

The school's whole academic and administrative infrastructure relies completely on the school's network and the EdAdmin Administration Programme. The academic staff are expected to be fully computer literate and to have the skills needed to create material electronically and record data on the network and intranet.

## **5. Evaluating, monitoring and reporting on the quality of Delivery, Teaching and Learning**

### **5.1 Assessment Programme**

The assessment programme is based on the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statements (CAPS). It must be noted that the DBCS uses the CAPS guidelines as a basis on which to build a programme suitable to the needs of our pupils.

Pupils in Grades 4 – 9 write weekly cycle tests as well as examinations twice a year (Term 2 and Term 4). Other school-based assessments are conducted each term to form part of a pupil's continuous assessment. The number of tasks per term is subject dependent. Academic staff are required to submit an overview of the Annual Assessment Programme for each grade to the Head of Academics before the academic year commences, or a termly programme will suffice. Adjustments to this programme must be communicated to the Head of Academics.

Academic staff are required to keep a record of all assessment tasks, including memoranda. A teacher's file, or other suitable storage method, can be used for this purpose. These tasks must be accessible to the Head of Academics. Once the test/exam has been administered, a copy of the question paper and memorandum must be placed in the learning area file in the Academic Office. An electronic copy of the exam paper must also be emailed to the Head of Academics, or stored on the server in the relevant folder. Exam papers are moderated.

Staff accumulate all the work produced during the term and record these scores on the EdAdmin system. Parents have access to these results as soon as they are recorded. The scores for individual assessment tasks, together with the termly reports, form part of a pupil's academic profile. Progress reports, containing results and comments, are issued at the end of each term. During Parent Weekends (Term 1 and Term 4) parents have the opportunity to meet and discuss their child's progress and any concerns that they may have. Parents are also able to communicate, via email, directly through the EdAdmin Parent Portal, with teachers.

### **5.2 Pupil Profiles**

The DBCS has an extensive database of information relating to the academic progress of all pupils within the school. This information is accessed through the school's network and the EdAdmin Administration Programme, to which all staff have access. The information contained in the database includes personal details of pupils and parents, a record of assessment results and teacher comments, as well as details on co-curricular and extra-mural involvement. Parents have access to information regarding the progress of their son, via the Parent Portal.

### **5.3 Pupil Tracking and Support Programme**

All assessment results for the current year, as well as those from earlier years at the DBCS, are stored on the EdAdmin system. The system allows for the generation of detailed reports to enable the statistical monitoring of students. The Head of Academics, together with the Academic Support Team, are responsible for tracking and monitoring the progress of pupils in the Academic Support Programme (ASP). The ASP will endeavour to assist these pupils or seek outside specialist intervention, if necessary. Details of this programme are available from the Head of Academics. All information regarding the intervention strategies employed are recorded.

## **6. Staff Development Plan**

Staff development and mentorship is seen as an essential factor for success by the school's Executive Committee (SMC). This is the responsibility of the Head of Academics. Providing opportunities for academic and professional advancement is one of the aspects of this plan. In-service staff development is timetabled twice a month into the Daily Routine and coordinated by the Head of Academics. In addition, all staff are encouraged to participate in professional growth workshops and conferences organized by appropriate bodies such as ISASA. All academic staff are required to be registered with the South African Council of Teachers (SACE) and are encouraged to take part in their professional development courses, or other suitable events.

## **7. Staff Appraisal**

Academic staff will be appraised throughout the year across a number of areas, including their academic contribution, their co-curricular involvement, and the various responsibility areas in which a staff member may have been engaged. The appraisal of all academic staff is the responsibility of the Head of Academics and the Executive Head. The Head of Academics reviews classroom practice by conducting class visits – the purpose of these is for appraisal and moderation. Staff will be appraised on their contribution and professional practice over a year, rather than from a single class visit. Feedback is on-going, with the primary goal being to monitor professional growth. Each staff member will be evaluated by using the prescribed DBCS appraisal criteria.

## **8. Moderation Policy**

Moderation occurs in a number of ways during the course of teaching and assessment.

Moderation of tests and exams occurs within departments - individuals are delegated to set tests or exams which apply across the whole grade. If the marking of the exam is undertaken by several people across the grade, then moderation of the marking takes place to ensure consistency of approach. Examinations should be moderated externally to ensure that the assessment standard is suitable and to gain comment of the validity and fairness of the examinations. The external moderator must be approved by the Head of Academics timeously. The Head of Academics must be informed of the outcome of the external moderation for monitoring purposes.

Once the various exam results are combined to produce a final result for a particular subject, the staff members of the department will discuss the results with the Head of Academics. Once the marks for all of the learning areas have been combined, the Head of Academics will communicate with parents of pupils who are in danger of not meeting the minimum requirements for promotion. At the end of an academic year, any pupils who have not met these minimum requirements will be discussed with the Executive Head, before a decision is reached, regarding non-promotion.

## **9. Pupil Appeal Procedure**

- A pupil, or parent, who wishes to appeal against results achieved, or reports provided, or any other serious academic matter, must contact the Head of Academics. Once the appeal has been made, the Head of Academics will review the case put forward and will convene a meeting attended by the pupil, his parents (if so desired), and the teacher concerned, if necessary. Should the parents not be able to attend such a meeting, details of the outcome will be conveyed to the parent telephonically or via email.
- In the event of the pupil not being satisfied with the outcome of the Head of Academics decision, an appeal to the Executive Head can be made. His decision will then be final.

## **10. Homework Policy**

All pupils are expected to do homework daily during the school week and it may be necessary to invest extra time over weekends. Regular homework sessions encourage good self-study practices and allow for the development of self-discipline and time-management skills. The expectation is that pupils should engage in about 45 minutes (Grades 4 – 6) and approximately 90 minutes (Grades 7 – 9) of homework each day. These times are guidelines and are dependent on the individual pupil.

Staff are expected to assign homework with a purpose. This may involve a follow-up on the concepts from the day's lesson and consolidation of the skills learnt. It may require preparation for the next lesson (investigative or research work and even reading ahead) or it may involve working on projects and assignments or studying for tests and exams.

The junior grades (4 – 6) have the opportunity of a supervised homework time at the end of each academic day. Their homeroom teachers take on the pastoral role of providing a consistent approach to monitoring the daily homework for these pupils with the aim of instilling a good work ethic and the skills needed to work independently from Grade 7. These pupils complete their homework in their homeroom before lunch. The homeroom teacher will monitor them.

The senior grades (7 – 9) are required to self-manage their homework time in their dormitories. The expectation is that these senior boys must complete their assigned work and will face consequences if they don't. These 'prep' sessions are supervised by a staff member and/or prefects or monitors.

## **11. Learning Area Policy**

### **11.1 Languages**

All written work must be controlled by the teacher. From Grade 4 - 6, a suggested 15 minutes of Home Language work should be given as homework on a daily basis. The type of homework set will be at the teacher's discretion. Reading in the Intermediate Phase should form part of the homework each day. The Reading for Comprehension (R4C) programme forms part of the English DBCS curriculum, its purpose being to assist pupils to improve their comprehension - an essential skill needed for learning.

### **11.2 Numeracy**

All written work must be controlled by the teacher. Class exercises should be marked and corrected by pupils, or the teacher. Homework should be set on a daily basis (15 min). Pupils must be tested regularly to monitor conceptual and procedural mastery. The focus must be on teaching for understanding rather than on teaching methods.

### **11.3 Content Subjects**

All written work must be controlled by the teacher. Teacher-supplied notes must be typed and legible. Pictures or passages in the textbook being used by the pupils are not to be photocopied to form part of the notes. Audio-visual material in class must represent the work presently being done by the pupils. A variety of research material must be used by pupils e.g. computer, magazines, books. Pupils must be given clear instructions for projects as well as how the project will be assessed. Outings and excursions must be planned and discussed with the Head of Academics before they take place and must have a bearing on the work being done in the class.

## 12. Teachers' Responsibilities

- To be aware of the contents of the DBCS Code of Conduct and Code of Honour, as well as any other policy documents pertaining to teachers of the DBCS.
- To make every effort to maintain the reputation of the school by not bringing its name into disrepute.
- To be on the school premises for the duration of the school day, unless by agreement with the Executive Head. The Head of Academics is to be made aware of any requests for leave (e.g. leaving the school property during the school day). Staff should make themselves available for consultation during the school day by working in the communal areas or academic block. The school day commences at **7:25 am (first bell) and ends at 1:45pm (lunch) and at 1pm on Wednesdays**. Academic staff may arrive at 8am on a Tuesday and Friday, unless specifically requested by the Academic Head to do otherwise.
- To regularly check and respond to emails within 24 hours.
- To meet deadlines set by either the Head of Academics or SMC.
- To be accountable for the quality of notes, tests/exams and other school-based assessment tasks and uphold an acceptable standard of teaching, always striving for excellence.
- To respect copyright laws when using reference materials.
- To consider the 'special needs' of each pupil, and as such, liaise with specialists dealing with these children (e.g. psychologists, and remedial teachers). Teachers must also, within reason, be prepared to provide academic support to those who need intervention, without expecting remuneration for this service.
- To prepare thoroughly for each lesson, taking into consideration the range in ability of the pupils.
- To be familiar with the requirements of the curriculum for the subjects that they teach.
- To be responsible for the safety and discipline of pupils. For this reason, classes must not be left unattended.
- To use appropriate language at all times and address pupils in a manner that would not be demeaning.
- To be punctual for classes, sport practices, school functions or meetings.
- To adopt a dress code in keeping with the profession of teaching. Refer to the DBCS Dress Code.
- To monitor learning – this is done by marking books and through regular assessments.
- To maintain contact with all parents, particularly those of pupils not coping in class. Issues should be brought to the attention of the parents before reports are sent out. The Head of Academics, or Academic Support Team (AST), must also be informed of pupils requiring intervention as soon as possible so that intervention strategies can be employed and that these pupils can be carefully monitored. Feedback must be given to the parents. The AST must keep records of the progress of these pupils so that accurate information is available for professional evaluation purposes.
- To compile valid regular assessments in line with the submitted assessment programme.
- To mark and return assessments to pupils within a week of the assessment being administered or handed in and to give feedback as part of the learning process.
- To only return assessments to pupils after recording the marks.
- To record the pupils' results on EdAdmin within a week of the assessment being administered so that parents receive regular on-going feedback.
- To ensure that comments and marks entered for reporting purposes are fair, meaningful and accurate.
- To keep a record of all work covered. This record must be available to the Head of Academics.
- To make every effort to attend all school functions such as parent meetings, open days or other functions deemed necessary by either the Head of Academics or the Executive Head. Optional functions will be indicated.
- To take responsibility for one's teaching venue. The general impression of the classroom should reflect the learning area being taught, displaying visual aids and other stimulating material. Venues must be clean and tidy and all maintenance matters must be referred to the relevant person for repair.
- To be vigilant when administering assessments so that the process is fair and results are valid.
- To safeguard confidential documentation and details pertaining to pupils' results and personal information.
- To undertake to do their share of co-curricular activities, such as assisting with academic support, enrichment activities, administrative duties, extra-murals and homework sessions. The holistic education of the pupils of the DBCS must be the priority – for this reason, all teachers must contribute their time.

Failure to adhere to the above would constitute unprofessional behaviour and may lead to disciplinary steps taken against the individual.

## 13. Academic Area Policy

- 13.1 Academic strategic meetings are held on a weekly basis and minutes of these are passed on to the Executive Head and other staff.
- 13.2 The Head of Academics must be copied in on all email communication with parents concerning academic matters or pupils.
- 13.3 Examinations and cycle tests must be of a professional standard in terms of content and layout. They must be fair (i.e. diagrams legible, numbering consistent, questions accessible when referring to sources). Such factors should be considered in the moderation process. A final copy of each examination and cycle test must be shown to the Head of Academics before bulk printing commences.
- 13.4 Academic planning for the year has to be handed to the Head of Academics before the academic year commences. This is only a proposed plan and can change as time goes on – but it should at least give some indication of the work to be covered over a time frame.

- 13.5 At the end of the term, marks have to be recorded, together with an industry symbol (effort code) and a comment. The set deadlines must be adhered to for school administration purposes.
- 13.6 Academic staff will be required, at times, to assist with detention on a Friday afternoon, when on duty. A detention programme will be organised by the SMC.
- 13.7 Academic staff are required to assist with 'prep' sessions when on duty, in order to ensure that the dormitory environment is conducive to learning.
- 13.7 A Merit/Demerit system is in place, covering all spheres at the DBCS. Serious disciplinary matters must be referred to the Head of Academics or Executive Head.
- 13.9 There are Edlab Cards/Cumulative Record cards which have to be completed by the homeroom teachers at the end of the year. These are stored in the front office. At the end of an academic year, a printout of each pupil's report must be filed. All other important information pertaining to the pupil, such as professional educational evaluations and documents relating to disciplinary matters are also filed there.

#### 14. Irregularities in Assessment Tasks

- 14.1 If a school-based assessment task was not submitted (or a test not written) because the pupil was ill, and it was not reasonably possible to expect the pupil to complete the task, then the pupil will not receive zero. If there is another legitimate reason, e.g. death of a very close family member, accident, etc, the pupil needs to, if possible, be allowed to submit the task/s not handed in, or a similar task. There might be situations where, if the reasons are legitimate, the specific tasks will be ignored when compiling the final mark and the total marks will differ from that of other pupils. The pupil must not be disadvantaged if circumstances were totally beyond his control. However, the term result must be in-line statistically with what he would normally achieve. If necessary, the term mark would need to be calculated for each individual case. Marks cannot be fabricated (statistically generated) but raw scores can be weighted to obtain a fair score.
- 14.2 If the pupil has enrolled at the DBCS during the course of the academic year and missed school-based assessment tasks which were completed before his arrival, then the term weighting must be adjusted. It may be necessary to adjust the promotion weighting to allow for the final examination to count more. This will be done in consultation with each subject teacher and Head of Academics.
- 14.3 Where a pupil doesn't submit work, owing to tardiness, the pupil must complete a 'Zero Letter', where he officially accepts his zero mark in writing. This letter must be handed to the Head of Academics. Such a letter is available from the Head of Academics after being completed and signed by the pupil and subject teacher. The pupil will then receive zero marks for this specific task/s and the Head of Academics will contact the pupil's parents. The pupil will still have to complete the task but will not receive any credit for his efforts. The Zero Letter enables the Head of Academics to keep a record of pupils who require disciplinary intervention for having a poor work ethic.
- 14.4 Plagiarism is not permitted. Should a pupil be found guilty of such misconduct he will be required to redo the task, or a different task may be assigned. Further incidences in this regard will incur more severe penalties.
- 14.5 Cheating, in any form, will be dealt with severely. Such cases must be referred to the Head of Academics. A record of such occurrences must be kept in the pupils' profile.

#### 15. Teacher's Records

Teachers must keep a record of various information pertaining to his/her teaching and the learning of his/her pupils. The file/s can take on any form (hardcopy/electronic) but must be accessible to the Head of Academics.

The teacher should have the following documentation available:

- Curriculum document/s for each subject
- A copy of the DBCS Academic Policy
- Assessment programme
- Record of work
- Evidence of term planning
- Copies of assessment tasks and memoranda (including moderation details)
- A record of pupils' marks

#### 16. Promotion Mark and Requirements for Progression and Promotion

From Government Gazette No 36041 (28 December 2012) and NPPPPR (National Policy Pertaining to Promotion and Progression Requirements):

Promotion Mark	SBA	End-of-year Exam
Foundation Phase	100%	Part of SBA
Intermediate Phase	75%	25%
Senior Phase	40%	60%
FET	25%	75%

### 16.1 Intermediate Phase

The NPPPPR stipulates that pupils in this phase will progress from grade to grade, if they achieve out of the six designated subjects:

- 50% for a Home Language
- 40% FAL
- 40% Mathematics
- 40% for two subjects

The DBCS pupils will be required to meet all these criteria. Pupils taking two Home Languages need to achieve 50% in one of these and 40% in the other. If the latter is English, then pupils who progress must be given academic support in the next grade. The six examinable subjects at the DBCS are listed in the Curriculum Overview.

### 16.2 Senior Phase

The NPPPPR stipulates that pupils in this phase will be promoted from grade to grade if they achieve out of nine designated subjects:

- 50% in a Home language
- 40% in a FAL
- 40% for Mathematics
- 40% in three other subjects
- 30% in two other subjects

Owing to the uniqueness of the DBCS curriculum, the pupils will be required to meet the first three criteria. Pupils taking two Home Languages need to achieve 50% in one of these and 40% in the other. If the latter is English, then pupils who progress must be given academic support in the next grade. **As the DBCS offers seven examinable subjects in this phase (listed above in the Curriculum Overview), a minimum of 40% is required in two other subjects and 30% in one other subject.**

### 16.3 Concessions may be granted to:

- Pupils who experience barriers to learning, provided all relevant educational and psychometric testing has been completed. Parents will be responsible for additional costs incurred due to these concessions. Each pupil's barrier will be considered independently. The DBCS has the right to recommend that parents seek an alternative educational institution, should the DBCS not have the necessary expertise or means to implement the recommended strategies.
- Immigrant pupils, children who entered the South African schooling system in Grade 7 or who started schooling in South Africa but completed two or more years abroad after Grade three, will be considered as having immigrant status for Grade 12. These pupils do not need to achieve 40% for Afrikaans First Additional Language (FAL) but must achieve 50% for English at the DBCS. The NPPPPR stipulates that only 30% at a FAL level for the LoLT is adequate for such pupils – this must be considered when discussing the promotion of such pupils.

### 17. Adjustments to marks for Promotion

Circular 3 of 2015 explains how marks can be adjusted for pupils in the Senior Phase who do not meet the promotion criteria (2016 – 2017). The criteria on how this is done will change annually until 2018, when only one subject (non-languages) can be adjusted by 2% to meet promotion requirements - condonations in one subject will then be allowed.

Should any adjustment be made for promotion purposes, the report mark will reflect the original result. The Head of Academics will provide details regarding the promotion status of the pupil in his/her comment. The adjustments must be recorded in the pupils' profile.

### 18. Colours and Honours

Points are awarded towards Academic Colours and/or Honours according to the DBCS Appraisal Policy document. Points are accumulated throughout a pupil's career at the DBCS, for various academic achievements. The Reward Policy is available on request.