Westminster is proud of its academic pre-eminence and reputation. The Head of Department thus occupies a pivotal and highly-valued place in the intellectual and cultural life of the School.

He/she is responsible to the Head Master for:

- the successful teaching of his/her subject and its contribution to the educational aims of the School in ways that will inspire pupils;
- the provision of leadership to departmental colleagues, playing a significant role in their review and professional development;
- the efficient administration of the department’s resources, facilities and budget;
- the effective representation of the department both within and beyond the School.

In the carrying out (and delegation throughout the department as appropriate) of the following detailed responsibilities and duties arising from the above, Heads of Department work closely with the Director of Studies as their line-manager and can expect his full support.

As senior members of the staff establishment, Heads of Department are expected to be fully conversant with all school policies and to play their part in promoting good conduct among pupils both within departments and throughout the School.

**Detailed Responsibilities and Duties**

1 **Providing Academic Leadership**

The Head of Department provides strategic direction and leadership to the department. In doing so he/she will:

a aim to see that the department has a collective vision of the subject and its teaching which celebrates diversity in both teachers and pupils, while ensuring the delivery to every pupil of an appropriate and positive experience of the subject;

b ensure that, as far as possible, the department is following the most appropriate external examination syllabuses; keep up-to-date with changes in syllabus requirements and the merits of new qualifications being offered by the examination boards, disseminating these in a clear and unbiased way to teachers within the department; include all members of the department in decision making about how best to respond to change and development in their subject and syllabuses;

c see that internal schemes of work, whether formal or informal, ensure that all pupils are taught in a demanding and inspiring way, which is also appropriate to their aspirations, abilities and previous experience of the subject;

d ensure that the department is aware of, and develops, its contribution to pupils’ overall education – their enjoyment of academic life, their ability to manage their own learning and their capacity for reasoning and arguing;
e ensure that the department has appropriate policies on, or practices in, use of ICT, learning support, setting of prep, marking and assessment, plagiarism, and differentiation; offer guidance on the effective and timely measuring of pupils’ progress through the routine setting of preps which chart a range of developmental points (written note-taking, research and essays, oral and/or practical work as appropriate to subject), as well as through formal assessments of knowledge in tests and termly examinations; ensure that all pupil work is correctly marked and returned within an agreed timescale and includes formative and summative marking;

f be well-informed about the range of ability of pupils within year groups, ensuring that strategies are developed and disseminated to teachers which enable pupils at the lower end to be helped, those in the middle to aim higher and those that excel to be fully stretched; ensure that pupils feel actively encouraged by frequent, accurate and detailed feedback on their progress (for instance by the giving of dignioras and praebenda) and understand how best to set and fulfil targets for their further self-development in the subject;

g ensure that departmental development plans, policies and practices are updated annually and aligned with the School’s aims and objectives;

h keep the department well-informed about academic matters which are under discussion in the School and the wider educational environment;

i see to it that the department contributes as required to the delivery of PSHE, ICT and other cross-curricular aspects of the School’s educational provision;

k compile, edit and keep updated the departmental handbook and website, ensuring that their contents are well-known to all members of the department

2 Supporting Teaching and Learning

The Head of Department is responsible for supporting the successful delivery of his or her subject’s contribution to the education of Westminster’s pupils, both within and outside formal lessons. He or she will ensure:

a that teachers are aware of new ideas, methods and resources within the subject, its particular contribution to knowledge, and have the opportunity to exchange ideas and good practice with other members of the department, with other departments at the School and with the educational world outside Westminster;

b the occurrence of lesson observations and / or sharing of lessons on a regular basis to help cross-fertilization of ideas between teachers and pupils; and the encouragement of dissemination of information about good practice within and across departments where appropriate;

c that displays and other material that might encourage wider interest in the subject, or support pupils’ learning, are provided in the department’s teaching areas;

d that teachers have available the resources necessary to encourage enthusiasm for, as well as achievement in, the subject;
e that pupils of all abilities and levels of interest have opportunities for engagement with the subject in a variety of ways, throughout the school day, and that appropriate deeper and wider engagement is available for those with a special interest in the subject;

f that the subject is appropriately represented in the curriculum beyond the classroom, for instance by offering pupils the opportunity of developing their own interest in the subject through the LSA and Options programmes, promoting and supporting academic societies and lectures, as well as running one-off projects and field expeditions, educational visits or prize essays where appropriate;

g that informed and detailed guidance on taking the subject is available to members of the department, pupils, parents, prospective entrants and teachers at relevant times, in particular when GCSE and A-level choices are being made and when pupils are deciding about university courses, and other possible post-Westminster destinations;

h that appropriate support is provided for those who wish to study the subject at university, both current pupils and, in accordance with the School’s policy on post A-level applications, for Old Westminsters.

3 Teaching Staff Management

The Head of Department has responsibility for the management of members of the department in their academic role and shares responsibility for their work in the School as a whole, their welfare and their professional development. He or she will:

a provide departmental input into the School’s professional development and review process as required –normally every three years and also via interim reviews;

b be aware of external opportunities for professional development in the subject and its teaching and bring these to the attention of members of the department as appropriate, identifying individual staff training needs and monitoring these, and offering development opportunities at regular intervals (these might be teaching-related to include refresher courses on treatment of topics or teaching techniques, or be subject- or career-related);

c delegate responsibilities within the department and offer opportunities for developing new or changing aspects of the department’s remit, so that members of the department gain appropriate experience as part of their professional development; identify opportunities for the development of special areas of responsibility within departments (if appropriate) in order to give all teachers a sense of their own development and value within the department and to the subject;

d mentor individual staff within the department and see this as key to an integrated and effective team (but formal appraisal should only be carried out within the framework of the School’s published policy on review and professional development);

e construct, in conjunction with the Director of Studies, the departmental timetable; allocate teaching periods to teachers commensurate with their full- or part-time status, in accordance with the expected commitments of teaching staff and taking account of responsibilities which are weighted against teaching periods (for example special responsibility reductions); ensure that teachers within departments are appropriately qualified to teach the relevant topics on the syllabus;
ensure that communication within the department is effective and includes everyone in the department via regular (minuted) departmental meetings; meet all teachers within the department on a regular basis to ensure they are in touch with the teaching practices and expertise of individuals within it; be visible around the department and be equally approachable for pupils and teachers who may wish to discuss subject related issues with him/her;

take part as required in the process of appointing new staff, in liaison with the Head Master, the Director of Studies, other members of SMC as appropriate, and the Personnel Bursar;

take part if ever required by the Head Master in formal staff management processes, such as the disciplinary procedure;

manage, in conjunction with the Bursar, support staff and peripatetic teachers attached to the department;

be the first line of support in providing guidance, and if necessary action, for a teacher who is having difficulties with a class, or with individual pupils, because of poor behaviour, or lack of effort or a worrying lack of progress;

have care for the welfare of staff within the department in accordance with the School’s stress policy.

4 Administrative Responsibilities

The Head of Department is responsible for:

checking that all teaching and public areas of the department offer a safe environment for both pupils and teachers to work in and that all the activities in which the department engages are conducted safely, with full risk assessments being carried out when necessary, and for reporting any deficiencies or concerns appropriately;

managing the department’s teaching area and keeping under review its use of space, liaising with the Bursar to ensure that decoration and maintenance is carried out to a high standard as required;

ensuring that the departmental budget is a realistic projection of the needs of the department and that up-to-date records of expenditure are maintained during the course of the year so that requirements for the future can be accurately assessed;

the provision, within the agreed budget, and management of the department’s resources; ensuring that all teachers are adequately resourced with books, materials and other equipment deemed necessary to carry out their teaching duties effectively;

the provision of books and other material to be issued to pupils and the maintenance of records of expenditure rechargeable to parents and passing these to the Bursar’s office in good time for accounting and billing purposes;

implementing the procedures which are associated with the department’s public examination entries, including managing any internal assessments which may form part of these, and, in particular, maintaining a formal document setting out how these will be conducted;
g co-ordinating, and ensuring the appropriateness and validity of, the department’s contributions to UCAS and other references;

h managing the department’s contribution to the School’s admissions testing as required;

i liaising with the Under Master to ensure that absent colleagues’ classes are appropriately covered, either within the department or externally;

j ensuring, during Lower School Expeditions, that the department can deliver its academic programme whilst simultaneously contributing fairly to the staffing of expeditions.

5 Representing the Department

The Head of Department represents the department inside and outside the School. He or she will:

a speak for the department to parents, colleagues in other departments, the SMC and the Governors;

b maintain an appropriate image for the subject within the School;

c contribute to the development of the School’s academic policies, in particular by membership of the Heads of Department Committee and/or Challenge Committee;

d look to extend and maintain regular contact with feeder schools (including the Under School), universities, examination boards and other schools (eg the Eton Group) as appropriate, keeping the Director of Studies informed of any significant news or developments.