

INTENT

There are several key concepts which drive our curriculum design. These are specific to our school at this time:

1. **Mission Statement**

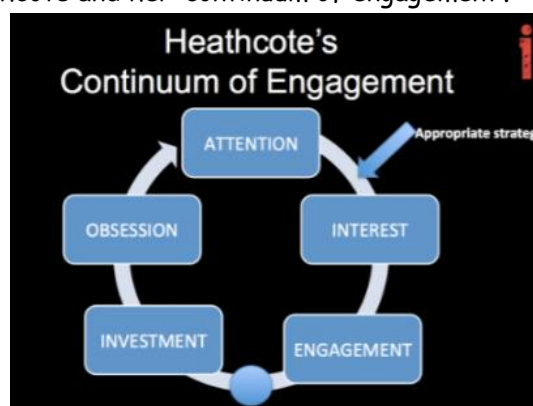
At St. Paul's Catholic Junior School, everything that we do centres around our Mission Statement:

'Learning from the example of Jesus, our school will be a place where everyone feels loved, valued and encouraged to be and do the best they can.'

We live out this mission statement through developing an ethos and curriculum that encourages our pupils to **be kind, be respectful and be resilient**. As a Catholic school, we believe that fostering a knowledge of Christ and nurturing the spiritual, personal, moral and cultural development of our pupils is fundamental to all that we do.

2. **Knowledge rich and humanity rich**

Our curriculum model uses the National Curriculum as its foundation, promoting our core values of kindness, respectfulness and resilience wherever possible. At St. Paul's, we want all of our pupils to become independent, active, responsible, articulate and confident citizens of the future. To do this, we aim for our curriculum to be ambitious, both knowledge and humanity rich. Our approach has been developed in partnership with the Ignite project and is largely based on the research of Dorothy Heathcote and her 'continuum of engagement'.¹



We aim for pupils not to be content with merely being engaged in their curriculum. We want each child to be actively invested in his or her learning, encouraging a 'botheredness' mindset. Engagement is not enough, our pupils need to be invested in their learning, moving from a state of being 'inert' to 'alive', applying their knowledge and understanding to make a difference to their own lives, the wider curriculum and the world. Whilst this helps us fulfil our mission statement, research has also shown that this emotional link promotes long term retention of learning.²

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We want our pupils to be creators, not merely consumers. In the words of Mary Myatt, ***"Creation in the classroom means knowing more stuff, having more insights and, over time, doing something on their own terms that makes sense of the knowledge learnt."***³ Our curriculum seeks to provide our young learners with the knowledge contained in the National Curriculum and then apply it in order to make a difference to their own lives, in their community and in their world. Our twice yearly Ignite link projects, based on social justice and conservation, provide opportunities for us to inspire our pupils to use their skills and their voices to create change for good in their own lives, in their communities and in the world.

Exposing pupils to the wealth of diversity in the world around us through curriculum learning is also a large part of a 'knowledge and humanity rich' curriculum. We aim for our pupils to experience learning based around people and stories from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds.

3. Oracy

Oracy runs as a thread through our curriculum. Research has shown a language and communication deficit for some pupils, particularly pupils from low income households⁴. Partly due to the effects of the COVID pandemic, but also wider socio economic factors, there is a higher level of deprivation among our pupils than in previous years (see IDACI rating). Our percentage of pupils with SEND also sits significantly above the national average. As Robin Alexander has expressed, ***"Dialogic teaching harnesses the power of talk to engage interest, stimulate thinking, advance understanding, expand ideas, and build and evaluate arguments, empowering students for lifelong learning and democratic engagement."***⁵ Our curriculum aims to be talk and vocabulary rich to help counter inequality, widen access to learning and improve life opportunities. Talk can also foster empathy and understanding, which again contributes to our 'knowledge and humanity rich' curriculum approach.⁶

4. Resilience

Throughout all of our learning and application of that learning, we promote a growth mindset approach. We aim to encourage resilience amongst our pupils, an 'I can...' attitude which perseveres when challenges are faced.

5. Physical and mental well-being

At St. Paul's Catholic Junior School, it is important to us that all members of our school community feel that their voices are heard and that they feel healthy both physically and mentally. We recognise the responsibility we have for the physical development and the well-being of our pupils. Our approach to our curriculum aims to build self-esteem, a respect for self and others, kindness and resilience, with staff modelling across the curriculum how to deal with challenge and adversity. We also have a role to ensure that pupils learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental

health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support. British Values permeate through the curriculum. We are safe space for LGBTQ+ community and proud allies.

6. Transition

We aim to strengthen existing links with our KS1 and KS3 colleagues enabling a smooth transition for all pupils, both pastorally and academically.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our school's curriculum is planned and sequenced so that new knowledge and skills build on what has been taught before. We recognise that new learning is fragile, so our approach is both generative and 'sticky', enabling our pupils to make links between new and existing knowledge to aid long term retention, whilst also reducing cognitive overload. This is done through well planned curriculum mapping and sequencing, with subject leads liaising with KS1, the curriculum lead and SLT to ensure a smooth progression of knowledge from our link Infant school all the way through to Year 6. Within lesson sequences we have embedded low stakes quizzes, sticky learning displays in class and recapping over prior learning. Key concepts are identified and progressively sequenced in planning units. Spaced repetition is mapped in to help pupils retain learning.⁷

Subject co-ordinators map out progressive curriculum coverage and year group specific long term curriculum maps identify when the different subjects and topics will be taught across the academic year. Most subjects are taught discretely, but subject leads working with class teachers make meaningful links across subjects to deepen pupils' learning.⁸ The Adrift refugee project and Chester Zoo conservation project, at the end of the Spring and Summer terms respectively, provide opportunities for pupils to apply knowledge and understanding by actively engaging with real life issues. Within History, Geography and Writing, prior learning is revisited and applied for purpose during these topics. In other subjects new learning is shared, but pupils are still encouraged to apply these new skills for the purpose of 'making a difference'. We aim for all pupils to feel that their voice is the most powerful tool - they can use their learning to make a difference to themselves, the community and the world.

We aim for our timetabling to provide equity across all subjects, whilst still working towards our whole school targets (specifically phonics/ reading fluency and Maths this year). Any gaps in learning continues to be a focus along with regular QLAs informs our current target areas.

We apply a range of strategies within our lessons to enable the pupils to become invested in their education and retain learning, again following the Heathcote model. Dilemma led learning, drama and 'mantle of the expert' are all selectively used by teaching staff as appropriate to provide a context to allow learning to be retained. As the cognitive scientist Daniel Willingham has stated, **"stories are psychologically privileged"**, so, where appropriate, we make use of narratives within lesson sequences, allowing better retention of knowledge within our long term memory.⁹ We are

also beginning to develop Oracy within our school as a way of enabling all pupils to develop confidence about their own opinions and eloquence in expressing them. We are also aware that Oracy is vitally important to enable the children to make progress in their writing. In the words of James Britton, "**Writing floats on a sea of talk**"¹⁰. We promote quality talk using Voice 21 strategies and encourage our pupils to reflect upon and evaluate their views and those of others concerning themselves, their community and the world. We have the expectation that this will also improve wider academic outcomes.

Reading is at the heart of our curriculum. As Mary Myatt states, "**Reading a story or high quality non-fiction text is the most efficient way to build vocabulary.**"¹¹ A range of quality texts and sources help to enrich the pupil's learning experience. Pupils regularly visit our school library, both to read for pleasure and to gain access to reading material based around curriculum areas. Each class also has a reading area of both fiction and non-fiction texts and class teachers promote texts relating to current areas of learning. Subject leads are involved in the monitoring, evaluating and improving the content of our library as relates to our curriculum whilst also promoting diversity and windows and mirrors stories.

Vocabulary development is integral to all of our teaching. It is progressively built up across lesson sequences, with each curriculum area having a vocabulary progression map of non-negotiable technical language to be taught and built upon. It is evident in displays within the classroom, particularly on sticky learning boards. Where appropriate, vocabulary is pre-taught, to raise the standard of classroom talk¹² when texts containing new vocabulary are introduced.

Personal, social and emotional development is taught in discrete lessons, on special celebration days and also through assemblies, as we seek to develop the whole child. British Values are addressed through PSHE but we are looking for ways to address these more explicitly across the wider curriculum.

Across the curriculum, we aim to celebrate diversity. We are always seeking to make sure that our reading resources derive from a broad range of cultures and backgrounds. Within wider curriculum lessons, pupils will study key figures from a wide range of circumstances who have had a significant impact upon their discipline.

Sport has always played a very important role in the life of St. Paul's, and we promote a healthy and active lifestyle for our pupils. Pupils participate in weekly PE lessons and teaching staff have access to the expertise of qualified sports coaches, who are regularly quality assured by the PE lead. In addition to this, we have employed sports coaches to facilitate an increased participation in and enjoyment of physical activity and competition for all on the playground at lunchtimes. We aim to offer a wide range of extra-curricular competitive sports and nurturing physical activity (e.g. mindfulness workshops).

We are building up a programme of enrichment for all subject areas. This could take the form of extra-curricular clubs, school trips or visitors/renowned scholars/authors coming to school or zooming classes. The purpose of these is to cement and add value to the existing curriculum. However, budget restraints will impact on the frequency and scale of these each year. With this in mind and with the aim of challenging stereotypes and promoting diversity we are beginning the Inclusion Quality Mark award this academic year.

In response to parental questionnaires and EEF research¹³, we have reviewed our homework policy. We plan for short, focused tasks which relate directly to what is being taught in class. We have adjusted tasks sent home, as we are aware the quality of the task is more important than the quantity. We have taken a consistent approach to homework across all years and are currently focussing on arithmetic, reading fluency and retrieval across the wider curriculum. TT Rockstars App provides additional support and instant feedback. Other homework is sent via Seesaw, enabling teachers to provide timely and bespoke, personalised feedback. Homework on Seesaw is also inclusive, as pupils can choose how to respond to 'show off' their learning (e.g. using voice notes, videos, written responses etc.).

As a school we continually invest heavily in CPD around the curriculum for our staff. We seek to enhance teaching skills and strategies to help raise standards across the full breadth of the curriculum. The Education Endowment Foundation (2021) note that ***"the best available evidence indicates that great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve pupil attainment"***.

We encourage our staff to be active learners, having recently begun to develop a 'pedagogy library' within the staff room. Teachers will be given staff meeting time to read, research and reflect around current educational practice. The aim is that all CPD improves our pedagogy; we are all lifelong learners, staff and pupils alike. Staff are invested in improving their own professional knowledge and enhancing knowledge and skills. They have an awareness of school priorities and have a thirst for meaningful professional development that will positively impact the school.

At the moment CPD to maintain the target of raising standards in reading fluency and phonics (via Read Write Inc) is a priority alongside further training on behaviour / relationships policy and procedures in conjunction with a whole school SEND focus for staff. Our first INSET day included a session on 'the why'¹⁴ we are taking on certain initiatives. As a whole staff we spent time reviewing Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction (2012) and how we can use this model across our curriculum.

Our monitoring cycle is set out at the start of each academic year. Monitoring includes book looks, lesson visits, learning walks, pupil/staff voice surveys and 'support' days (completed in conjunction with SIL). All monitoring undertaken helps to improve our practice, with the aim of improving the outcomes for our pupils. More recently our staff have volunteered to be observed by subject leaders in wider curriculum lessons (Art, DT, History, Geography, Music and Computing) to share good practice and focus on areas we need to improve on as a whole school.

Assessment:

How do we know that pupils know more?

Formative assessment is an integral part of daily lessons and is first and foremost the essence of helping make our pupils make instant progress. This is done through a mixture of high level questioning, discussion, Oracy activities and written work. A record of work may take a variety of forms over time, such as books, photographs, videos and voice notes. Pupils will be encouraged to present their understanding in a variety of formats, as we value learning above 'task completion'. As Mary Myatt says, ***"Completion of a task and understanding are not the same thing, but they are often confused."***¹⁵

We have moved away from pre-prepared worksheets and blindly following generic schemes; all resources are purposeful and encourage pupils to wrestle with the key concepts. We have also moved towards scaffolding rather than relying on pre-defined differentiation, which puts a ceiling on pupils' learning. We aim for all pupils to access age related content as far as possible. To ensure our curriculum is inclusive we will from time to time need to provide scaffolds. Scaffolds are temporary to support a cognitive process but they will be removed when appropriate to encourage independence.¹⁶ Scaffolding may take the form of using equipment, adult/peer support, vocabulary mats/reference materials, participation in precision teaching groups in our Hub, sentence stems or voice recording (amongst other approaches).

We have moved towards a verbal feedback approach as opposed to marking everything that moves! Within each lesson, teachers unpick misconceptions with the whole class or individual groups. Targeted support groups led by the class teacher or LSA are formed. LSA support is fluid among all learners. Teachers also praise and share quality learning with the class. Improvements are modelled with the whole class or targeted groups as required. Our verbal feedback form encourages a more diagnostic approach to groups and individuals and facilitates regular and ongoing target setting.

Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesh-Römer (1993) highlight good feedback is:

- *Specific and clear;*
- *Focused on the task rather than the pupil; and*
- *Explanatory and focused on improvement rather than merely verifying performance*

Pupils are responsible for their own learning and are encouraged to reflect and edit independently. We want them to sensitively critique their own work and that of their peers.

We still believe that summative assessment has a value, when used in conjunction with teacher assessment. It helps subject leads and SLT to see a 'snapshot in time' of pupils' understanding related to age related expectations across the school; helps us to analyse current trends and hone in on vulnerable groups that might require further support or intervention. A record of formal assessment against key objectives is timetabled termly using past SATs/NFER for English and Maths (QLAs are then completed to help inform subsequent teaching). For wider curriculum subjects, pupils are assessed against the key concepts over time. Standardisation within Maths and English is well developed and is something we are trying to replicate across wider curriculum areas with the support of SIL. We are focussing on more developed subject areas such as: Art, DT, History, Geography and Science at the moment.

As well as summative assessment results, smaller step assessments for pupils with SEND such as PIVATs; RWI phonics tracking; Sandwell; NARA, Vernon and McMillan reading and spelling assessments are utilised as appropriate. As a school, we aim to celebrate all achievements. We define progress as knowing more and remembering more. It is the widening and deepening of knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviours.

References:

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6. H. Roberts and D. Kidd, 'Uncharted Territories: Adventures in Learning'
7. Deans for Impact (2015)
8. Agodini et al (2009)
9. D. Willingham, 'Ask the Cognitive Scientist'
10. J. Britton, 'Language and Learning' (1970)
11. M. Myatt, 'Back on Track', p. 64
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13. Teaching and Learning Toolkit: Homework (Primary) +2 months impact
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