

St Mary's Primary School

Curriculum Overview



Our definition of learning: a change in long-term memory

Our definition of progress: knowing and remembering more

Intent

Our curriculum is designed with three goals in mind:

1) To provide a carefully structured and knowledge-rich academic curriculum which is built around helping pupils to access wide ranging knowledge stored in their long term memory. We build our curriculum around powerful and culturally useful knowledge which changes pupils' perceptions and their understanding, as well as developing their values.

2) To provide a rich 'cultural capital' in the knowledge of the world which prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. Through this, we develop the breadth of pupils' vocabulary so that they can express themselves maturely.

3) We aim to enable children to learn skills, knowledge and develop concepts that will help them grow into compassionate, creative people who can work and be part of a community with others and be better equipped for the ever changing world they will live in. We encourage pupils and adults to have a caring and considerate attitude towards each other. There are strong Christian values throughout the school. At the heart of everything we do is the belief that everyone is loved and that we provide a warm nurturing space allowing all to succeed.

We teach the national curriculum and our intentions for each subject area are defined by the purpose and aims of study of the national curriculum. The most important subject content is defined in our medium term plans through '**threshold concepts**' which organise new knowledge systematically and ensure a logical progression to pupils' knowledge and understanding.

We prioritise **reading** across the curriculum by making sure that across all subjects pupils read texts which help them to broaden their vocabulary and deepen their understanding of the subject matter. We consider the ability to read with meaning as a basic and fundamental tool to ensure pupils' progress and to closing advantage gaps.

We have prioritised **drivers to our curriculum** breadth that shape our learning experiences, bring about the aims and Christian values of our school. We believe that our children deserve and need us to provide more than just the National Curriculum. Life has so much more to offer and our children have so much more to learn and experience. With this in mind we worked to prioritise the things we wanted our children to experience during their time with us. We use these six 'drivers' to underpin the development work we undertake in all areas of school life and to ensure our curriculum offer is enriched and personalised to our children. These are:

Spiritual Development	Developing the character of each child by instilling our Christian values of Koinonia (community), service, truthfulness, courage, compassion and creativity. We provide opportunities for spiritual reflection and understanding of the significance of faith.
Inclusion	Every child deserves the right to a transformational education. We design, adapt and extend our curriculum to ensure that every child is included.
Community	We are at the heart of Timsbury village, serving the local community. The school has a 'family' ethos, driven by our Christian value of Koinonia. Our strong links to the local church and community ensure all of the children have every opportunity to understand the value of community.
Opportunity	We want our children to have every opportunity throughout their time with us. We believe Primary School should be 'the best years of their life' and we want to ensure every opportunity is provided for them to experience a broad and rich curriculum.
Leadership	We believe in leadership at every level. We provide opportunities for pupil leadership throughout the school. We want our children to lead themselves and others; to take responsibility for our school, the community and the world around them.
Environment	We believe our children need to know about and understand the world that is beyond their immediate doorstep. They need opportunities to experience the richness of its diversity and show they care about its management and sustainability. We care about God's creation and leaving a better world for future generations.

Implementation

Our curriculum is taught according to subject disciplinary knowledge, and making links between knowledge in subjects where appropriate. This helps us to focus on the most important and useful knowledge in each subject and to avoid distractions and irrelevances.

The curriculum breadth for each year group ensures each teacher has clarity as to what to cover. As well as providing the key knowledge within subjects it also provides for pupils' growing cultural capital and knowledge of the world.

We have identified in each subject the 'threshold concepts'. These are domain specific concepts which open up new ways of thinking about the subjects and help pupils to link new knowledge and commit it to their long term memories. We consider this to be the most powerful knowledge in each subject domain. Threshold concepts are the key disciplinary aspects of each subject. They are chosen to build conceptual understanding within subjects and are repeated many times in each topic. These concepts also help teachers to present new information clearly and build on what has been taught before.

We assess the depth of understanding and pupils' mastery to expertise in these concepts through milestones for learning. Each topic, each term, builds towards an expert outcome, or "POP" (proof of progress) task. These tasks check pupils' procedural knowledge, ie. their ability to apply and reason with knowledge. These assessments are used to provide teachers with information for future planning. This helps to inform their future retrieval practice and the planning of tasks by identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge and their skill in the application of it.

Teachers provide plentiful opportunities for retrieval practice. Our short and medium term plans reflect the research of cognitive science, that progress means knowing more and remembering more. Therefore teachers use regular assessment in the form of low and no stakes quizzes and spaced practice and repetition of fundamental knowledge. Teachers assess and improve pupils' sustained memory through these low stakes methods as well as plenaries and mini- plenaries in lessons. Assessment, therefore answers two main questions: 'How well are pupils coping with curriculum content?' and 'How well are they retaining previously taught content?'

Vocabulary is how pupils conceptualise and express knowledge. Teachers' plans prioritise the acquisition of knowledge through vocabulary. We prioritise reading through all curriculum plans, and building pupils' tier 2, or academic and literary vocabulary by access to challenging texts.

For pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities or those who need more time to embed fundamental knowledge, key knowledge deficits are identified and tasks planned which avoid overloading pupils' working memory. Retrieval and spaced practice of fundamental knowledge is a priority for these pupils. Teachers plan tasks where modelling and scaffolding of fundamental knowledge are additional provisions.

Impact

The impact of the curriculum on pupils' long term memory is checked by our subject leaders who undertake pupil conferencing to identify what pupils have learnt and remembered in each year group. In addition, subject leaders check pupils' work each term to determine their progress in curricular goals and their depth of understanding.

The impact of our curriculum will be that by the end of each milestone, the vast majority of pupils have sustained mastery of the content, that is, they remember it all and are fluent in it, or have achieved an advancing stage of mastery. Some pupils have a greater depth of understanding. We track carefully to ensure pupils are on track to reach the expectations of our curriculum.