

Curriculum Policy

Curriculum Aims

The Curriculum at St John's is based on our belief that the underlying purpose of education is to teach our children how to live their lives fully and richly, to become their happiest and kindest selves.

With this vision in mind, our curriculum aims to:

- Enable children to understand themselves, their strengths and their weaknesses;
- Teach children *how* to learn and to take responsibility for their own learning;
- Give children the confidence to take risks, make mistakes and persevere to solve problems;
- Give children the confidence to find and express their voice;
- Help children to understand and care for others and for their world
- Encourage children to ask questions and develop their ability to think critically, to wonder at the world and to develop their curiosity;
- Inspire children with a love for learning by challenging and engaging every child, thereby ensuring that all children make progress.
- Develop core skills (including oracy, literacy and numeracy) in addition to culturally valued knowledge so that they can contribute to the ongoing dialogue of humanity.
- Prepare children to thrive at their secondary schools in all subject areas
- Actively promote fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, preparing children for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in a British society.

How do we achieve these aims?

The above aims are achieved at St John's through three key overlapping elements that form our approach to teaching and learning: the curriculum design, the particular way in which we deliver curriculum and, above all, the teachers' detailed and caring knowledge of the children and their wellbeing.

Curriculum design

The richest possible curriculum gives children the greatest number of pathways to excellence, the greatest opportunity to discover their value, to find their full range of talents and their particular pathway to success. The curriculum at St John's is therefore broad and balanced; each curriculum area supports and enhances the others and subjects cannot be seen in isolation. No one subject is more highly valued than another, but all have their place in a balance of studies that is carefully reviewed on an annual basis. Throughout all subjects, we promote fundamental British Values and prepare children for the responsibilities, experiences and opportunities of life in a British society (for further details, including specific examples of how we do this, see SMSC and British Values Policy). Details of the current balance of studies can be found in the Curriculum Plan.

St John's has a skills based curriculum and Heads of Department continually review a subject's 'scheme of work' to ensure that the development of these skills is being provided for. The schemes of work may take into account the National Curriculum but are not exclusively based on it. Although the school is exempt from the 'Early Years Foundation Stage Framework', the Kindergarten Curriculum is currently based on the objectives from the framework. A focus on the skills taught within a curriculum area and the benefits of responding to children's own learning and their interests, means that content is continually revised, adapted or changed. More information about the content, aims and objectives of each individual subject, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, can be found in the [Curriculum Summaries](#) and the [Kindergarten Curriculum and Supervision](#)

document. Speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills are developed across the curriculum and these documents give more specific details of content and skills.

Personal, Social, Health, Economic and Emotional Education (PSHEE) underpins other curriculum areas and begins with our 'Emotions for Learning' curriculum, which was specially designed at St John's in collaboration with a child psychotherapist. It is based on research in the field of attachment theory and aims to promote secure attachments between children and their teachers so that children learn to manage their emotions and use their minds. Fostering each child's ability to think for themselves and solve problems is the primary goal of the E4L curriculum. As children get older, the PSHEE curriculum covers lessons in economic well-being, relationships, health and careers advice. Careers advice is presented in an impartial way, giving children information to help them make informed decisions about a wide range of careers so that they can lead fulfilled lives. More information about the PSHEE curriculum can be found in the [PSHEE Curriculum Summary](#).

On Thursday afternoons at Senior House, timetable is 'collapsed' and children experience a range of enrichment activities and lessons that help to develop their questioning and thinking skills, collaboration and creativity. Learning experiences provided on Thursday afternoons include:

- Trips and visits: these include the opportunity to hear from inspirational speakers from a range of different careers, beliefs and experience and to visit locations that inspire wonder and curiosity
- My Mind: children in Senior House have a series of lessons that draw together the common thread from different sections of the curriculum: Philosophy, Study Skills, Research Skills and Mindfulness. It teaches critical thinking, self-management of learning and management of self.

Curriculum delivery

Children at St John's are usually taught in classes of up to 20 children. In KG – Form 2 classes are mixed ability taught by one main class teacher, though with some specialist teaching. In Forms 3 – 6 an increasing amount of setting is introduced and children are taught by an increasing number of specialist teachers. Full details of teaching arrangements can be found in the [Curriculum Plan](#).

The school expects high standards of teaching and educational practice. The inspirational teachers at St John's are expected to teach well-planned lessons that make effective use of class time in order to ensure that all children make progress. They are constantly researching and developing the latest ideas in educational practice in order to improve our ability to meet our stated curriculum aims. We spend time carefully planning, trialling and evaluating any new initiatives. If these prove to be successful, staff are then trained in order to embed new initiatives into their current teaching practice to make up the special education that we offer. A regular cycle of observation, review and professional development supports teachers to enable them to perform at the highest level. Some of the key themes in how we teach at St John's are:

- Creativity: Creativity is one of the most sought after skills by employers today. At St John's we believe this can be taught and we aim to nurture this creativity in the children, supporting them to look at familiar things in a new way or explore new possibilities, examine problems with an open mind, make connections and learn from mistakes. This is underpinned by the development of sustainable creative practice in our teachers. Central to nurturing creativity for us is exploring how the approaches of creative arts subjects can be used as fundamental approaches to all learning. For example, through the use of play, 'slowness' and pupil choice. At Byron House teachers have received training by the Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination Partnership and have explored how the approaches of creative arts subjects can be used to enhance learning in all areas, including giving children more choice in and leadership over their learning. 'Child initiated learning' topics have also been introduced once a year for each year group in Byron House.
- Engaging and intrinsically motivating lessons: teachers aim to develop a love of learning in the children. Learning experiences are designed to be meaningful, engaging and challenging. This might be through planning trips and events, building up to performances, allowing children to choose their own topic and questions for study, learning through investigations, connecting work to current affairs, completing child led topics or through finding and building on the children's own interests as a starting point for study.
- Differentiation: we aim to challenge each child at the appropriate level. Teachers are therefore expected to differentiate work whether they are being taught in a setted class or not, so that children are being challenged at the right level in order to ensure that all children make progress. Work is differentiated in different ways, including adapting tasks for different ability levels, using the challenge

by choice method, providing different mark schemes to focus work at an appropriate level, questioning at different levels, giving specific roles (such as chairing a discussion in philosophy), providing extension projects or support packs for homework.

- Learning through guided play: play has been called the highest level of research. Through play, children are involved in active, engaged, minds-on thinking that is fun and riven by intrinsic motivation. Play offers a risk-free environment where children can explore ideas and deepen learning through application and collaboration. The curriculum in the pre-prep (Kindergarten to Transition 2) centres around play-based learning, with children having free-flow access through to the outside area and, in T1 and KG, across both classrooms in the year group. Play is carefully planned for and guided. Our teachers arrange resources to be accessible, introduce learning points or stimuli, offer challenges and play alongside the children to direct, scaffold, engage and lead the children on to a deeper level of understanding.
- Critical thinking: All teachers are trained and experienced in questioning and supporting children to discuss and think critically across the different subjects, from being guided to solve problems independently in Design Technology to the central place of investigations in Maths, from debating in English to choosing their own materials and then evaluating their work in Art. The introduction of philosophy lessons has further strengthened children's ability to question and their skills in argument and critical thinking. In Byron House, teachers have been trained in the use of thinking skills based on the research by Jane Simister whilst Senior House teachers have received training from our resident philosopher (from the Philosophy Foundation).
- Independent and collaborative learning amongst the children): Research has shown that children learn most effectively from each other and when they have agency over their learning. The place of Drama lessons, from the very start of a child's life in St John's, is one key way in which children develop the skills to learn collaboratively since they are taught how to listen and respond to each other, to build role-plays and share ideas and to work together as a team. 'Self-Organized Learning environments' in which children work in groups doing computer-based research to find answers to 'big questions' with very little adult intervention are another means of fostering collaboration between the children.
- Mindfulness: all teachers are trained in 'Mindfulness' techniques and the theory behind the importance of mindful practice. In Byron House, stilling and mindfulness exercises form part of the E4L curriculum and are practiced every day. In Forms 3 and 4, Tai Chi has been introduced in order to develop mindful movement. In Senior House, every lesson begins with a 'Mindful Moment' and in Form 6 children are taught an eight week Mindfulness course that teaches the theory and practice of Mindfulness. Many children choose to practice mindfulness independently, for example in preparation for exams or sports day races.
- Mindsets for Learning: at St John's we want to help our children to become motivated, happy and independent problem solvers with a 'growth mindset'. This means having the belief that, with effort, they can develop their abilities, become a successful learner and thus achieve more. We have identified twelve learning dispositions (focus, collaboration, curiosity, risk-taking, flexibility, reflection, linking, perseverance, compassion, imagination, rigour and enjoyment) which have been introduced across the whole school and are now part of the language of every classroom and are incorporated into all areas of teaching and learning.
- Digitally Enhanced Learning: digital technology is used wherever trials at St John's have shown that it enhances learning and is continually under development. The wide range of tools at the children's disposal allows them to work collaboratively, communicate effectively and to be creative in their thinking. Google Suite for Education is used across the site from KG to Form 6 and in the Pre-Prep the use of iPads and other technologies is fully integrated in the Learning through Guided Play approach. These tools provide a means for pupils to share content with their teachers but also to share their ideas and findings with the rest of their class in an open and collaborative way which encourages creativity and diversity of thought and promotes the exchange and debating of ideas.
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education (SMSC) and British Values: developing children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is at the heart of the ethos of St John's and is woven into every area of the curriculum. For full details of our SMSC teaching, please see the [SMSC and British Values Policy](#).

Contextual Wellbeing

To be known, to be noticed, to be valued, to be cared for are fundamental things for all of us, these are the essentials of a good childhood and they are at the heart of the St John's way.

Our teachers devote themselves to knowing each child, to noticing and building on their strengths and responding to their needs. This results in an equitable, inclusive and cohesive classroom culture for all. Our teachers and tutors are expected to know all that they can about the world of each child within and beyond school. We have rigorous frameworks for knowing and communicating about and acting for each child, including:

- Weekly meetings to discuss the children, to communicate information that will improve our care for them and to develop strategies to support them to make progress;
- Action Plans for every child, which are formally reviewed before the start of each term;
- Meetings between each child and their Tutor every fortnight (minimum);
- Regular department meetings in which children's progress in individual subjects can be shared, discussed and improvement planned for;
- Regular work reviews in order to plan how to improve our teaching, curriculum or the progress of a child;
- Observations of individual children in class, not only by the class teacher but also by middle or senior leaders and individual needs teachers as required;
- Care plans for children where a medical or learning need requires a particular plan of intervention;
- Learner profiles for each individual, which outline a child particular needs and key strategies for support that are needed to ensure that all children make progress;
- For children with an Education and Health Care Plan granted by the Local Authority, we write Individual Education Plans that detail targets and strategies for support and are reviewed each half term.
- A range of formal and informal assessments, the results of which are analysed and used to inform the discussions and processes above. Full information on the role of assessment at St John's can be found in our [Assessment Policy](#).

For further information about our support for children with learning needs, please see our [Individual Needs Policy](#). For further information about our extension of children, please see our [More Able Children Policy](#). For further information about our provision for children with an additional language, please see our [English as an Additional Language Policy](#).

Development Planning

The whole school development plan sets out the school's departmental and cross-subject developments. New developments begin with writing a 'Terms of reference' that detail the background, aims and success criteria for a development as well as how the development will be achieved and in what timeframe. The Terms of Reference are discussed with the Director of Studies and must be approved by the Head before being added to the school development plan.

New developments may arise through:

- departmental review (either formal reviews or through the routine observation, review and discussion with the Director of Studies);
- comments, suggestions or reflections made by children or parents;
- interests, research or experiences of individual members of staff;
- research into latest developments and educational theory.

All developments must have clear success criteria and must show how they will be measured and evaluated before the development begins. They almost always begin with small scale trials led by a working party or department, before being rolled out across the school if they prove to be successful. Evaluations are based on a range of evidence, including the views of children, work reviews, assessments and statistical evidence, observations and teacher feedback.

Developments are assessed and balanced on an annual basis by the Director of Studies to ensure that they are prioritised correctly and that they are manageable.

Evaluation and Review

In addition to the evaluations of school developments, Teaching and Learning is evaluated and developed through an ongoing process of departmental and teacher review, led by the Director of Studies working with Heads of Department. The process involves:

- Half termly work reviews led by Heads of Department
- Termly meetings of each individual Head of Department with the Director of Studies to discuss work reviews, observations, assessments, children and teacher feedback and developments. Meetings are recorded and development plans updated following the meeting.
- Peer lesson observations within departments
- An Annual cycle of formal lesson observations for each member of staff by Senior and Middle Leaders. Grades are recorded on an observation spreadsheet, which is analysed by the Director of Studies to inform development planning. Analysis is reported to the Senior Management Committee in the Teaching and Learning Report on a half-termly basis.
- Departmental meetings
- Discussions with pupils
- Annual Balance of Studies review, written by the Director of Studies

Roles and Responsibilities

Under the guidance of the Head, the development of Teaching and Learning at St John's is the responsibility of the Director of Studies. The Director of Studies reviews the Curriculum and balance of studies on an annual basis, manages and oversees the school Teaching and Learning development plan and is responsible for working with a team of teachers who review and analyse the academic progress for individual children.

The Director of Studies manages other members of staff with responsibility for individual subjects (Heads of Department). Heads of Department are responsible for curriculum development within their subject. This includes reviewing and updating the schemes of work, developing the curriculum in the light of research and whole school developments, reviewing the work of pupils and managing assessments within their subject.

The Director of Studies also manages and oversees members of staff who are responsible for specific developments within school as well as those responsible for specific areas of Pupil Improvement (such as the Individual Needs Co-ordinator, the Byron House Director of Studies, the Senior Schools Liaison and Assistant Director of Studies).

Linked Policies

This Curriculum Policy should be read in conjunction with the following additional policies and documents:

- [Curriculum Summaries](#)
- [Curriculum Plan](#)
- [Individual Needs Policy](#)
- [More Able Children Policy](#)
- [English as an Additional Language Policy](#)
- [Kindergarten Curriculum and Supervision](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education and British Values Policy](#)