Curriculum Policy

September 2025

ST CHRISTOPHER'S
HAMPSTEAD

CURRICULUM POLICY

Policy to be reviewed annually			
Action	**Owner**	**Date**	**Completed**
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Accessibility notice

To enable easier reading, this Policy is available in a larger font upon request

CURRICULUM POLICY
Incorporating the School's Teaching and Learning Policy and Mission Statement
'A curriculum breathes life into a school or teacher's philosophy of education – it is purpose enacted'
(Dylan Wiliam)

1. What is a curriculum and what is its purpose?

Our school curriculum is the sum of everything that we do, everything that we plan to enable children to learn.
It must reflect our beliefs as a school – what we want our school community to be, our aspirations and expectations of ourselves and our pupils, where we see our place in the world.
It should be planned, sequenced and reviewed but also grows organically as we respond to a changing world - with due regard for its excitement, challenges and threats - diversifying beliefs, government guidance and what we learn and incorporate.
Children and parents also contribute to its organic design. The curriculum is like the law. We have frameworks (such as the National Curriculum and our planning) - these are our statutes. Like common law, we respond to pupil feedback and, incorporating our own experiences, feed this into the daily experience for the children.
The curriculum has many faces, all of them intersecting – personal, social, physical and academic education. These aspects are revealed in what we plan, how we deliver it and how we respond to what we see.
It will encourage curiosity, igniting our pupils' and staff's passion for learning and build creativity through rigour.

1.1 An important caveat

Emphasis is placed in this policy on what is planned for in lessons and learnt therein, representing the proportion of time pupils spend in lessons. However, curriculum embraces the playground, the Lunch Hall, assemblies, clubs – these are all planned for with the same purpose.

1.2 Principles of curriculum design

In building our curriculum, we acknowledge Dylan Wiliam's seven key principles of design, operating together:
Balanced – promotes intellectual, moral spiritual, aesthetic, creative, emotional and physical development as equally important
Rigorous – seeks to develop intra-disciplinary connections yet teaching the subject matter in a way that is faithful to the discipline
Coherent –makes explicit links between the different subjects/experiences encountered
Vertically Integrated – focuses on progression by carefully sequencing knowledge; provides clarity at what getting better at the subject means.
Appropriate – avoids making unreasonable demands by matching level of challenge to a pupil's current level of maturity/aptitude
Focused – seeks to keep the curriculum manageable by teaching the most important knowledge; identifies the big ideas or key concepts within a subject
Relevant – connects the valued outcomes of our curriculum to the pupils being taught it.

1.3 A curriculum for today's world

The school takes its responsibility to educate its pupils as good people and British citizens in a modern world very seriously: to prepare them for the world *they* will inhabit.
While we share from the 'best that has been thought and said', we encourage our pupils to take a critical view of history, culture and thought, acknowledging in an age-appropriate way that as well as

towering achievements, human history has been scarred by such things as war, slavery and environmental destruction.
To achieve this, we extend our curriculum to take account of diverse ideas and cultures to broaden our pupils' world view and impress on them the need for us all to behave with equity and decency. Our curriculum is applicable for our pupils' world today and tomorrow (such as the evolving emphasis on STEAM within it).

1.4 Sustainability

The school will never shy from addressing the most pressing concerns of our age. Sustainability is, and will be, a consistent thread in our teaching and behaviour. We will ensure that:

- opportunities are not missed for building sustainable habits
- opportunities are created within our curriculum for education about sustainability through collaboration with staff and outside agencies
- the threats that face us and the realities of them are presented in an age-appropriate way, underpinned by optimism and an understanding that our collective and individual action can make a difference
- we develop a conscience about sustainable behaviour, giving scope to pupil voice to guide us in our responsible behaviour
- we challenge and reverse wasteful behaviour

1.5 Our mission as a 'prep' school

We are cognisant of our identity as a prep school. We build our pupils' expertise in English, Maths and Reasoning from ground up, the programme intensifying in school-specific preparation from January of Year 5 to January of Year 6. We will ensure that no stone is left unturned in enabling our pupils to get into the best schools – that is, the right fit for each child.

1.6 Our mission as a school

Our education must, and will, extend beyond the conventional horizons of 'academic education'. Our mission as educators, working alongside parents, is to enable children to become good people, emotionally literate, healthy, empathic, responsible to themselves and others. Independent and ready for senior school, university, work and adult life.
Our activity as teachers isn't merely confined, therefore, by the parameters of what we plan. Our curriculum is also the 'unspoken lessons': our behaviour management, the example we set in our speech and behaviour to our colleagues and the children, the time and advice we give to the children, the space we give them to make good decisions, to make mistakes and learn from both.

2. Curriculum: construction

2.1 Timetable

The timetable is the enacting instrument of our curriculum, incorporating playground, lunch and assemblies and acknowledging the vital part they play in a pupil's education. The greatest proportion of time is devoted to English and Maths throughout the school.
The timetable will promote intellectual, moral spiritual, aesthetic, creative, emotional and physical development as equally important, weaving the threads of Early Years education through the school. In EYFS, emphasis is on the three key areas of the EY framework, with discovery through play a permeating theme. The framework is laid for a subject-specific curriculum, with an ambition for strong development in English and Maths. The spirit of curiosity engendered in Reception will be upheld throughout a pupil's life here, a broad and rich diet of creative arts, technology, humanities, language and science giving every pupil a chance to develop a passion.

2.2 Planning

The foundation for the bulk of our subjects is the National Curriculum. However, we will always look to extend our pupils beyond it.
In terms of teacher planning, we use a waterfall method.

- **Learning Progression Documents** (LPD): at the apex, setting down sequenced learning intentions taking pupils from Reception to Year 6. Written by subject leads
- **Long Term Plans** (LTP): a brief overview of content headings for each term. Written by Subject Leads
- **Medium Term Plans** (MTP) – distilled intentions from the LPD for each term. Written by all teachers. For all non-English and Maths teachers, the MTP documents incorporate their WLP. Space is provided for assessment
- **Cross-curricular Medium-Term Plans** – a brief summary of the headline topics each term, enabling meaningful intra-disciplinary teaching and learning to happen
- **Weekly Lesson Plans** (WLP) - the daily enactment of our learning intentions. Vital to pupil progress. These are written on separate templates by Maths and English teachers
- **Learning Enrichment** (LE) - the LE team plan according to need identified by subject and form teachers, creating a continuous assessment model via their AFL documents. Teachers contribute written feedback to these documents at specified intervals (such as LE Carousel Weeks)

Planning takes account of the prior knowledge and current ability levels of ***all*** pupils and their varying needs. It takes account of, and acts upon, assessment, particularly feedback we glean from pupils, about where we should take them next.

2.3 Subject-specific vocabulary
In every plan, teachers take account of the vocabulary which pertains to their subject. They help pupils acquire a meta-language for each discipline. This assimilation is vital to their ability to understand the subject content, creates a common language and reduces cognitive load.

2.4 Assessment
Our philosophy is: Don't create curriculum without thinking how it will be assessed'. When building plans, teachers will plan for how it is to be assessed (formative and/or summative), what they hope to gain from assessment and how they will act upon the pupil feedback.
Please consult the Marking and Feedback Policy, and Assessment Recording and Reporting Policy for further details.

2.5 Resources and task design
Teaching staff will select the resources best designed to implement a learning intention. Tasks set should be intimately linked to the intention and take account of the ability levels of all the children. We follow John Hattie's prescription - 'not too easy, not too boring'.

2.6 Teaching
In planning, teaching and assessment, teaching staff will be guided by these vital principles:

1. **We learn what we think about** – the importance of creating a calm and ordered environment, of knowledge/skill selection and how we teach (the pedagogy should be linked to the content)
2. **What we know influences what we learn** – how quickly and how weak we learn new things derives from: effective sequencing, deliberate vocabulary instruction, memory support in lessons (giving opportunities for retrieval) and teaching of effective learning strategies
3. **Our working memory is limited when learning new things –** explicit instruction is required (don't assume pupils always know what we are talking about), materials designed with cognitive load in mind; explanations to enable schema formation

4. **Fluency comes about through practice over time** – lots of practice and questions (varied), spaced learning and metacognition

2.7 Metacognition

Metacognitive tools will be constantly used as the vehicle to enhance our pupils' ability to plan, do, assess and review, the overarching aim being to instil pupil autonomy:

- Visible thinking: Thinking moves and routines identified as the building blocks for 'how' to learn as well as providing a framework for discussion and evaluation.
- Scaffolding: a teaching approach where educators provide temporary support to help pupils achieve learning goals they couldn't reach independently. As pupils gain confidence and competence, the support is gradually removed, promoting independence and mastery (depth).
- Mapping Tools enable children to plan, retrieve and assemble knowledge
- Weekly Philosophy lessons to foster listening and articulacy
- Targets used to challenge and spark reflection

Our St Christopher's Habits are the weft of our curriculum encouraging self-regulation and personal responsibility, care for our environment, creativity and curiosity and ambition.

3. Curriculum: enactment

3.1 Reading

Reading will always be central to our curriculum, and its aims. Our pupils will be taught phonological awareness and decoding via sound-word connection from Reception upwards to the point where each child is fluent. We will be vigilant in ensuring these skills are embedded. Every child's reading is heard multiple times a week until they achieve decoding fluency, and reading programmes built for home support, the emphasis shifting along this path to comprehension of narrative, mood and character. Where possible, senior pupils read to their younger counterparts.

Beyond the mechanics of reading, books are cherished as the gateway of imagination and discovery, building vocabulary and cultural capital. Books are at the heart of the English curriculum, with its pronounced emphasis on guided reading. We value reading which is why it is timetabled and protected as part of our weekly curriculum from Reception to Year 6.
All pupils will leave St Christopher's with a love of reading.

3.2 Technology

Technology, both in terms of device and infrastructure use and applications for learning, remains central to our vision of arming our pupils for their future. Digital Technology is taught to every class, a rigorous and creative discipline. Every opportunity will be given for teachers to integrate technology into their lessons and for pupils to learn how to use it appropriately in the service of their learning (such as the recent adoption of 1:1 devices for pupils in the Upper School). To support thoughtful integration, teachers are encouraged to use the PICRAT framework to evaluate how technology enhances pedagogy and student engagement. In summary, technology must support the key precepts of cognition.

3.3 Learning Enrichment

Our planning, teaching, assessment and delivery will enact the needs of all pupils, ensuring that those with specific needs can learn and perform to their best. At St Christopher's Learning Enrichment is embedded in the daily life of the school and is not seen as separate from the classroom.
Please consult the Learning Enrichment Policy for specific details.

3.4 Homework

For homework to have impact in the primary phase, it must follow on from, or build upon prior learning. Extended practice or retrieval practice are excellent ways to achieve this. In the younger years, homework focuses on number and deliberate practice (Maths) and reading (English) for the cumulative benefits of fluency in decoding, cultural capital and vocabulary.
Please consult the Homework Policy for more details.

3.5 Remote Learning

The school maintained its broad and rich curriculum during lockdowns and is ready to resume its remote provision immediately, should the need arise.
For further details, please consult the Remote Learning Policy.

4. Beyond the classroom

The curriculum is much more than the sum of what happens in the classroom. Our co-curricular programme will constantly evolve to enrich our pupils' experience of school, fire new passions and enable discovery across an array of disciplines (creative arts, sports, language, technology, chess etc.).

Assemblies, workshops and visiting speakers play a pivotal role in our pupils' education, with themes interwoven to enthral and educate (such as Black History Month, mental health, STEAM).
Pupils are also given a wide range of leadership opportunities allowing them to develop specific expertise and understand the skills required of leadership (such as via the regular presentations they deliver) and the responsibility that goes with it.

4.1 Play and lunch

Ample play times and lunch are staple ingredients of our curriculum, providing opportunities for pupils to learn through play, piquing their imagination and giving them a chance to learn social interaction in a less moderated atmosphere. Playtime snacks and nutritious lunches are designed to fuel the pupils for the challenges of a long and rigorous school day.

4.2 Performance opportunities

Assemblies are also a platform for pupil performance. A panoply of class assemblies, concerts, plays and presentations, delivered by pupils, gives them a stage to develop their confidence and articulacy.

5. The endgame: purpose and impact

Our curriculum is a rich soil in which pupil passions flourish, igniting a love of learning and fondness for intellectual rigour which will sustain them through their lives. We must, and will, prepare the girls for a successful transition to senior school, and fit them with the hardy dispositions and intellect to thrive in an evolving and challenging world.