



Curriculum Intent

‘Wonder is the desire for knowledge.’

St. Thomas Aquinas

Ambition

Our Mission Statement makes clear that we serve to help our families in the formation of their children by providing a well-rounded education, full of challenge and rigour; fun and creativity; excitement and wonder. Our ambitious curriculum lies at the heart of our provision and educational endeavours and is central, therefore, to this aim.

‘Striving for excellence in all that we do, reflecting the Light of Christ to the world.’

Our academy motto expresses our firm and enduring commitment to endeavour for excellence. Our intent is to provide our children with an educational offer that enables them to achieve high academic standards, rooted in an ethos based on the gospel values of Jesus Christ, and where our Cornerstone Values of Love, Virtue and Goodness, Prayer and Service, Radiance, Joy, Wonder, and Excellence lie at the heart of daily life in our academy, and which enable our children to fulfil their God-given potential, and so ready them to contribute positively to society in service of others.

Depth

Our curriculum has been carefully designed, organised, and planned to provide a real depth of learning for all pupils, including children who are disadvantaged, who have a special educational need or disability, those for whom English is an additional language, and those who are working above the national expectation. Using the National Curriculum as the progression model, our curriculum plans clearly document and sequence what is taught over time within each subject, outlining the knowledge, skills, and understanding we strive for our children to acquire and develop. Our curriculum is based on one fundamental principle that every child will achieve the highest possible outcomes in their academic and personal development that they are capable of.

In all subjects, leaders have carefully sequenced the learning from Early Years through to Year 7 to ensure systematic and cumulative knowledge acquisition, thus taking account even of our oldest pupils’ future learning as teachers carefully prepare our children for the next phase of their education at secondary school.

At St. Bernadette’s we view progress as the widening and deepening of essential knowledge, skills, understanding, and learning behaviours. As learning involves an alteration to long-term memory, we have designed our curriculum to ensure that children are not merely covering subject content, but are achieving a depth to their learning which enables them to use their skills and understanding in all areas of the curriculum.

Our careful curriculum design and planning means that we build in many opportunities for repetition and practise, revisiting prior learning on a daily basis, and thus providing opportunities for the securing of essential knowledge, skills, and understanding in every subject. Through careful planning we strive to move the nature of children’s thinking to a higher order deep level of understanding rather than just acquiring new facts and knowledge. In essence, we want our children to be able to know and remember more.

Breadth and Balance

At St. Bernadette's we have designed, planned, and implemented a curriculum which provides breadth and balance for every pupil, and which takes careful account of the needs of the community we serve and also of the local context – factors we identify as being central to the vision we have for our curriculum.

It is our underlying belief that every child should experience the feeling of success in a broad range of curriculum subjects. We recognise the uniqueness of each individual, that different children have different qualities, gifts, skills, and talents, and see it as our duty to ensure that our curriculum is well balanced throughout children's time at the academy – in this way pupils have the opportunity to explore different curriculum areas, discovering their personal interests and strengths, and are supported to 'shine like bright stars for all to see'.

Our curriculum ensures that every child receives an appropriate mix of academic and personal development which means that in practice our curriculum places a great deal of importance on both core and foundation subjects. We place a high priority on ensuring children's physical and mental wellbeing are met, a necessary quality for being 'ready to learn'. We understand that children will not be successful learners unless they are emotionally secure, and in addition to delivering planned curriculum content which supports this need, we can adopt a flexible approach to timetabling to ensure that we can meet and respond to any needs that arise. The academy also employs a full-time Nurture Team Leader, ensuring that children's physical and mental wellbeing are as valued and important as academic development.

Our broad approach to the curriculum is not at the expense of high standards in core subject areas, and our curriculum balance necessarily reflects the importance we assign to English and Mathematics, as well as Religious Education and Science – subjects which support and have significant linkages with other curriculum subjects. High standards and enabling children to reach national expectations in key subjects is of vital importance if they are to succeed at the next stage of their education and to go on to achieve full and happy lives and careers.

Due to the typically low starting points of our children in terms of language and communication, from the very start of Early Years we ensure that our children are exposed to a language-rich curriculum and learning environment, with a particular focus on the development of vocabulary. The academy also has a significant proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language, and for all these reasons vocabulary development, and implicitly reading, remain a key focal point of our curriculum throughout in order to support the effective and sufficiently rapid development of all children's English language. Furthermore, in serving pupils whose backgrounds span a variety of different cultures we have ensured that through our topic approach pupils have regular opportunities to focus their learning using their own cultural background and to share this knowledge with all pupils.

Our local employment base is heavily rooted in the local steel industry, supporting the livelihoods of many of our families, and we are proud of the cultural heritage of our locality. The local steel industry and its history is a further example, therefore, of the breadth and relevance we have sought to build into our curriculum.

We seek to inspire our pupils and raise aspirations through a very broad curriculum offer which clearly includes but goes well beyond the classroom. Cultural capital is supported through carefully planned, relevant school trips that provide a wealth of life experiences, including a residential trip to Robin Hood's Bay; in addition to a broad extended provision offer encompassing our Breakfast Club and morning exercise, a range of lunchtime sports, and numerous after-school clubs; to involvement in the Chaplaincy Team, School Council, and Subject Ambassador groups; as well as regular visitors to classrooms with a careers-related focus relevant to our themed topics; a specific unit of work for older pupils covering the science of learning, and life skills with a career-related focus delivered by a qualified careers tutor; and by partaking in annual events such as Anti-Bullying Week, Safer Internet Day, NSPCC safeguarding workshops and assemblies, charitable fundraisers, and much more.

In summary, our curriculum has been designed to offer our pupils a broad range of quality experiences which contribute to every child receiving a full and rich curriculum, including a breadth of academic, spiritual, social, and cultural activities. These activities enrich the lives of our pupils and those of our whole academy and we are proud to be able to give our children the skills, confidence, and self-belief to lead a happy and fulfilled life by encouraging them to work towards their goals and dreams in life. Our unique curriculum enables our pupils to make excellent progress both academically and personally and ensures that every child is given the opportunity to achieve and to flourish.