



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 full and best selves, 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 the skills to learn how to learn and so to manage their own learning;
- Give children confidence to take risks, make mistakes and persevere in solving problems;
- Give children confidence to find and express their voice;
- Help children to understand and care for others and for the world;
- Teach children to think for themselves and work both independently and collaboratively, taking charge of their own learning;
- 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 at the appropriate age and level, thereby ensuring that all children make progress (including the most-able children, children from whom English is an additional language, children with specific learning needs and children with an Education and Health Care Plan);
- Teach children the core knowledge (including speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills), with the skills to enable them to use this knowledge, in order to lead fulfilled lives and act with wisdom and care in the world;
- Actively engage children in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to develop well-balanced and caring citizens who respect their environment and those around them.

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 content, the particular way in which we teach the curriculum and, above all, the teachers' detailed and caring knowledge of the children.

Curriculum

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 skill development is not seen in isolation. St John's provides children with a linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. No one subject area 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 spiritual, moral, social and cultural values appropriate to prepare children for the future life and working environment (for further details, including specific examples of how we do this, see SMSC Policy). Details of the current balance of studies can be found in the Curriculum Plan.

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 our child psychotherapist. It is based on the latest research about 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. When children can manage their emotions and use their minds, they learn to think for themselves and solve problems and the primary teaching goal of the E4L taught curriculum is to foster each child's ability to problem solve. More information about the PSHEE curriculum can be found in the [PSHEE Curriculum Summary](#).

The Kindergarten Curriculum is currently based on the objectives from the 'Early Years Foundation Stage Framework' framework. More information about the content, aims and objectives of each individual subject 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.

How do we teach the curriculum?

Children at St John's are usually taught in classes of up to 15 (Pre-KG) or 20 (KG1-T1) children. Classes are mixed ability taught by one main class teacher, an English Class Teacher and supported by a Chinese Teaching Assistant and a Child Care Assistant. 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 and trialling, evaluating and giving training in any new initiatives so that once they are proved to be successful they are embedded in our teaching and together 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:

- Critical thinking: All teachers are trained and experienced in questioning and supporting children to discuss and think critically across the different subjects.
- Independent and collaborative learning amongst the children (developing speaking and listening skills): The place of Drama lessons 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. 'Child initiated learning' topics are being introduced once a year for T1. Children use skills learned through 'Thinking Skills' lessons to discuss and agree a topic of learning chosen by them and then to take this forwards over the course of a half term in the directions that they themselves choose, asking questions that they pose and selecting the best ways in which to answer them. Through a final presentation of learning (in a vehicle again chosen by children, from a class exhibition to a spoken presentation) children make links between the different aspects of the learning that each group, individual or pair has been studying and ask each other questions. Child initiated topics have proved to be a highly motivating and inspiring way of learning and the children have readily taken learning home for further exploration.
- Mindfulness: all teachers are trained in 'Mindfulness' techniques and the theory behind the importance of mindful practice. Stilling and mindfulness exercises form part of the E4L curriculum and are practiced every day.
- Learning environment: our classrooms have all been designed in such a way as to maximize children's views of nature and to be a calming space avoiding overstimulation. The most recent classrooms aim to include write-on walls and tables in order to facilitate exploratory thinking and the use of discussion, display, collaborative and independent learning.
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education (SMSC): 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 Policy](#).
- Digitally Enhanced Learning: digital technology is used wherever trials at St John's have shown that it enhances learning. This is something that is continually under development. Currently, digital technology is used to: support children's own research and develop their critical analysis and research skills.

- Study Skills: in each subject teachers develop not only content knowledge but skills for study, helping the children to learn how to learn. For example, how to use mind-maps to plan, how to structure written work and how to learn vocabulary.
- Individual expression: in all subjects, teachers aim to develop the child's awareness and expression of their own individual voice. Teachers do this by teaching children to observe and reflect on topics, providing a scaffold to help structure or guide work and then build confidence to explore their ideas, whether through choosing their own materials and angle of study in Art or allowing them freedom to solve problems and make mistakes in Construction class.
- Engaging and motivating: 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, doing child led topics or through finding and building on the children's own interests as a starting point for study. Particular events that inspire the children and bring together the different strands of learning include: book week (in which a range of authors come to school to speak to the children or lead workshops), poetry evening (a performance of the children's own poetry), musical concerts, drama productions for every year group annually, fairs organized by children (such as the Easter fair), Enterprise events in Kindergarten, competitions, and 'Wow days' in which children are immersed in a topic for half a day of activities such as problem solving and imaginative challenges.
- Differentiation: we aim to challenge each child at the appropriate level. Teachers are therefore expected to differentiate work, 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, providing different mark schemes to focus work at an appropriate level, questioning at different levels, giving specific roles, providing extension projects or support packs for homework.

Knowing the Child

Education at its best is a deep act of care. If we care, then we will notice. If we notice, then we will act on a child's behalf. If we act for each child, then each of our children will grow best, will achieve best, will become their best selves. To be known, to be noticed, to be valued, to be cared for: 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.

In their learning and in their life at school, teachers devote themselves to knowing each child, to noticing and responding to each child's strengths, each child's needs. 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 and develop strategies to support them better and ensure that they make progress;

- Action Plans for every child, which are added to on a minimum of a weekly basis and which are formally reviewed at the end of each term;
- Weekly staff meetings to communicate information about children that will improve our care for them;
- 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 in order to inform action planning;
- Care plans for children where a medical or learning need requires a particular plan of intervention;
- Ability profiles for each class, which outline children's particular needs (such as a need for extension in a particular area or an identified learning need such as dyslexia) and key strategies for support that are needed to ensure that all children make progress;
- Pupil Learning profiles for any children with a learning need who have had an additional assessment that summarize the learning need and identify the key actions for support for the term.
- For children with an Education and Health Care Plan, 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](#).

The children do not need to know of these things processes explicitly but they know that they are known and noticed, and the security they have in their relationships with teachers who truly know them and care about them is the springboard for their learning and the guarantee of their well-being.

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 and 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 Head);
- 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 are proved 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 Head to ensure that they are prioritized 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 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 Head 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 Head to inform development planning. Analysis is reported to the Senior Management Committee in the Teaching and Learning Report on an half-termly basis.
- Departmental meetings
- Discussions with pupils
- Annual Balance of Studies review, written by the Head

Roles and Responsibilities

The development of Teaching and Learning at St John's is the responsibility of the Head of School. The Head 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 Head 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).

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](#)
- [Kindergarten Curriculum and Supervision](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education](#)