

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School

Curriculum Policy

Member of Staff Responsible for the Policy: Associate Vice Principal in charge of Curriculum

Date on which this Policy was last reviewed: September 2017

Date by which this Policy is to be reviewed: September 2018

Dissemination of the Policy: School Website

1. St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School Curriculum: Key Principles

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic school offers a broad and balanced curriculum tailored to meeting our core purpose: Committed Learners. Exceptional People. Pope John Paul II referred to RE as “core of the core curriculum”, and as such our Catholic values underpin the whole curriculum. The traditional disciplines of languages, mathematics, science, history and geography should all remain and feature strongly in the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School curriculum, but the creative and physical arts are just as important. To ensure our students experience a curriculum that gives them the best opportunities in later life and is underpinned by our belief in the limitless potential of our students

To achieve such a curriculum, we need to fulfil the following key principles:

- To provide a rigorous academic curriculum that is challenging, enriching and accessible to all, whilst offering an equally challenging vocational opportunities for students whom these are best suited.
- To differentiate our curriculum in appropriate pathways for specific cohorts of students e.g. our most vulnerable or our highest starters (Blue, Red, Green and Yellow at KS4).
- To provide continuity and progression between the key stages, using assessment intelligently and to inform learning, and not solely as a tool for summative judgment
- To provide a coherent programme of personal, health and social education (supported by our Learning 4 Life Programme) that ensures our students become Exceptional People.
- To recognise the importance of both formal and informal taught curriculum within the school’s timetabled programme and that which takes place out of normal lesson time or the school day.
- To provide expert, up-to-date careers guidance that is presented impartially and gives our students access to the best information available to schools.
- To promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- To ensure that students are best prepared for national examinations and the increasing academic demands of terminal examinations.
- To maintain the highest standards of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum so that students have essential skills for life.

2. Key Stage 3

2.1. St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School students will receive a rich and varied curriculum within Years 7 and 8, using the National Curriculum as a key driver and enriched by a wide range of additional opportunities for learning and personal development.

2.2. Whilst utilising the best teaching and learning strategies and research, we aim to develop the individual student to a high level of competence in all subject areas. The Key Stage 3 curriculum aims for students to enjoy learning and develop the attitudes, understanding, skills and confidence to thrive in a changing world.

2.3. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is taught in subject areas and the overview of what is taught in each subject is available on the school website.

2.4 In 2017/18 we will be developing our curriculum into a **Knowledge Based Curriculum** in which we place 'what we teach' at the centre of our improvement planning.

2.5 Cognitive science tells us that teaching knowledge is the necessary partner critical to achieving culturally literate citizens who are able to meaningfully participate in democratic life. Our adoption of this curriculum is driven by our unending mission to seek educational excellence and equity for all children.

2.6 Subject areas will codify the precise knowledge that underpins their subject and will communicate this to students with knowledge maps. The critical element of our teaching will be to fully understand memorisation techniques and ensure interleaved practice and deliberate practice become the basis of our work.

3. Key Stage 4

3.1 Pathways are introduced at Key Stage 4 to ensure that students continue to follow a broad and balanced curriculum that is suited to their individual needs. We aspire for every student to complete Year 11 with the best set of GCSE/Level 2 qualifications to take them on to their next stage of learning whether this is Post 16 study, employment or training.

3.2 Whilst the precise nature of the knowledge is defined for us at KS4 by specifications the principles of the knowledge based curriculum will run through to Key Stage 4. This will change the way we assess, report and teach students. There will be significantly greater emphasis on knowledge and as such, more assessment based on the principles of **deliberate practice**.

3.3 Details of the Key Stage 4 curriculum are regularly updated on the school website in the Options Booklet.

4. Key Stage 5

4.1. St Thomas Aquinas Catholic school offers a wide range of A Level and Level 3 qualifications at Key Stage 5. Details of the Key Stage 5 Curriculum can be seen in the Sixth Form Prospectus and school website.

4.2 In addition we offer a comprehensive package of extra-curricular activities including DofE, sport, theatre, music, community activities, and support for younger students and charity work.

4.3 As part of the weekly timetable, all Sixth Form students are required to take part in the 6th Form Learning for Life and Aim Higher programmes. We strongly believe in developing the 'whole person' in the sixth form, we regard this opportunity for students to gain wider experiences outside of their subject curriculum as an integral part of our service to students.

5. Learning 4 Life

5.1. PSHE is a statutory but non-examined subject. It helps to give students the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to lead confident, healthy and independent lives.

5.2. Our Programme of Study ensures we:

- promote our core virtues of integrity, compassion and service that underpin the programme of study.
- place the spiritual and moral development of our students as the key driver behind our Learning4Life programme.
- develop skills and attributes such as resilience, self-esteem, risk-management, team working and critical thinking.
- focus on understanding how students are developing personally and socially, tackling many of the moral, social and cultural issues that are part of growing up.
- teach and learn about bullying, citizenship, drug education, healthy eating, physical activity, mental and emotional health, wellbeing, and sex and relationships.

6. Enrichment and Learning beyond the classroom

6.1. At St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School life is enriched by a range of extra- curricular activities. A broad spectrum of sporting, musical, creative, scientific, DofE and other activities are offered after school.

6.2 Travel and residential trips are an integral part of broadening student experience and are available at all Key Stages.