St John's CE VA Primary School
Curriculum Policy

1. Rationale:

At St John's CE VA Primary School we are:
Loved by God - Learning with Jesus - Living by the Spirit.

This Vision underpins the purpose of all we do and is founded upon the understanding that the world has meaning, purpose and design. Our Curriculum is a means to seek *how* to live in the world, not just *know about* the world.

It aims to nurture a school community that questions, challenges and explores with the self-confidence and security in our understanding of ourselves as being loved by **God**, unique and individual; guided by the example of the life and work of **Jesus,** who shows us what it is to be human; and supported by the constancy of the **Spirit**, which lets us know that we are not alone in this journey.

St John's Curriculum is a research-led curriculum, characterised by Drivers that encapsulate this ideal at its core. The Drivers (derived from Chris Quigley Essentials Curriculum 2013) thread through all aspects of our broad and balanced curriculum, layered and designed to build into a cohesive whole of what it means to be human – artistic faculties, sporting prowess, moral sensibilities and a spiritual quest.

Our Curriculum aspires to shape and develop values for life and embed a love of learning that inspires ambition without insecurity, in a meaningful and flourishing future.

2. Our Curriculum:

At St John's, we have developed a curriculum moulded around three key Drivers (Enquiry, Diversity and Possibility), which balances the acquisition of knowledge with the Christian values that underpin all we seek to achieve.

These Drivers shape our curriculum breadth and are used to ensure our children have appropriate and ambitious curriculum opportunities.

Outlined below is an explanation of those value drivers in more detail. These drivers are unique to St John's and are embedded within the Curriculum through 3 Enquiry, Diversity and Possibility questions.

Enquiry: These are the facts and ideas - the substantive knowledge - that form the foundation of the core curriculum. Carefully selected and connected this knowledge also holds within it the recognition that individual experience, response and solution are crucial to the learning experience.

Diversity: Opinions and perspectives are altered by personal experience and difference. This driver recognises that to build positive identities it is essential to value and respect difference and actively resist discrimination and prejudice. Weaving diversity into the fabric of children's everyday experience is an important step in helping children accept, understand and value their rich and varied world.

Possibility: Connection is the life blood of this curriculum, creatively open to bridging connections between the subjects and using knowledge imaginatively and courageously to reach beyond themselves into the existential and the undiscovered.

Through embracing the freedom of possibility and discovery in knowledge without boundaries, children become lifelong learners.

3. Core Skills:

The core skills listed below are **Active**, **Skilful and Creative.**

Active Learners… Seek out and enjoy challenges. Collaborate with others. Show commitment, resilience and perseverance. Remain curious and ask questions.
Skilful Learners… Speak clearly and convey ideas confidently. Read and communicate ideas in writing efficiently and effectively. Calculate efficiently and apply skills to solve problems. Use new technologies confidently and purposefully.
Creative Thinkers… Ask questions to extend thinking. Generate ideas and explore possibilities. Overcome barriers by trying out alternatives and new solutions. Connect ideas and experiences in inventive ways. Remain resilient in the face of existential ideas.

Teachers focus on developing learning opportunities that are designed to explicitly develop the above-mentioned key skills alongside national curriculum subject content.

Enquiry Plan and research. Analyse and evaluate. Share ideas and collaborate. Take time to reflect critically on ideas, actions and outcomes. Support conclusions using reasoned arguments and evidence.
Diversity Recognise that they can influence their environment and community. Show a commitment to justice and recognise their roles as global citizens. Explore issues, events and problems from different perspectives. Communicate learning in relevant ways. Show empathy.
Possibility Show flexibility and resilience. Ask critical and challenging questions. Take risks, and have the self-confidence and freedom to fail, yet keep trying. Recognise, blend and bridge connections across subject areas. Adapt ideas as circumstances change. Communicate learning and suggest alternatives.

At various points throughout their learning journey, children will embody the outlined core skills – cyclically and systematically developing, refining and enriching their episodic, procedural and semantic knowledge to form a meaningful schema.

4. Intent:

In line with evidence-based guidance and research, (*See Appendix) St John's Curriculum actively recognises that Learning is a change to long-term memory. Our aims, thus, are to ensure that our pupils experience a wide breadth of study and have, by the end of each Key Stage, long-term memory of an ambitious body of procedural and semantic knowledge. Furthermore, the National Curriculum 2014 states:

> *3.1 The national curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.*
>
> *3.2 The national curriculum is just one element in the education of every child. There is time and space in the school day and in each week, term and year to range beyond the national curriculum specifications. The national curriculum provides an outline of core knowledge around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons to promote the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as part of the wider school curriculum.*

We invest our children with the **Cultural Capital** that gives them vital background knowledge required to be informed and thoughtful members of our community who understand, articulate and enact the principles outlined in the School's Vision of being Loved by God – Learning with Jesus and Living by the Spirit, a Vision which courses through the life-blood of our school.

Our Curriculum distinguishes between subject topics and '**Threshold Concepts'** (the Big Ideas that rest behind and connect the disparate and elements of Learning). Threshold concepts tie together those disconnected elements into meaningful schema. The same concepts are explored in a wide breadth of topics. Through this forwards and backwards engineering of the curriculum, students return to the same concepts repeatedly and gradually build understanding of them.

St John's uses Chris Quigley's concept of **Milestones** to structure and describe progression within our Curriculum. Based on the National Curriculum, Milestones run in two-year increments and include the procedural and semantic knowledge our children need to understand and create connections between the Threshold Concepts or the Big Ideas, creating a mental intra-curriculum, where ideas are connected rather than subject specific references.

Cognitive science research tells us that working memory is limited and that cognitive load is too high if pupils are rushed through content. This limits the acquisition of long-term memory. Cognitive science also tells us, that in order for students to become creative thinkers, or have greater depth of understanding, they must first master the basics, which takes time.

Within each Milestone, students gradually progress in their procedural fluency and semantic strength, moving towards the creative application of knowledge by setting concrete, firm foundations, extending the mental schemata and returning to the start, in order than new knowledge may be assimilated and connected.

Importantly thus, progression becomes a cyclical process rather than a linear one.

Equally, pedagogical styles support and foster this cyclical progression; direct instruction predominates in the early stages of learning and discovery and problem solving based

approaches later. Enquiry, Diversity and Possibility Tasks and Progress Tests are used to benchmark curriculum expectations in each cognitive domain.

5. Implementation.

For subject specific overviews and detailed outlines of Teaching and Learning within each subject, reference should be made to individual subject policies.

In general, St John's Curriculum is broad, balanced, coherent, and imaginative. It is based on evidence from cognitive science and is characterised by the **Rosenshine** guiding **Principles of Instruction**. These Principles overlap and vary according to purpose and objective. There is always knowledge; there is always practice, there is always a role for checking for understanding – but the way these things take form will vary significantly from subject to subject.

Two key ideas underpin these principles:

1. Learning is most effective with spaced repetition and review.
2. Retrieval of previously learned content is frequent and regular, which increases both storage and retrieval strength.

In addition to these, learning is understood to be invisible in the short term and that sustained mastery takes time.

Our content is subject specific, we make intra-curricular links to strengthen schema. Continuous provision, in the form of daily routines, replaces the teaching of some aspects of the curriculum and, in other cases, provides retrieval practice for previously learned content.

6. Impact:

Monitoring is five-fold:

1. Learning Observations
2. Learning Walks
3. Learning Talks
4. Work Sampling
5. Assessment (including Comparative) in combination with Progress Meetings.

In line with the general philosophy of our curriculum, Monitoring is collaborative, reflective and consistently seeks to improve outcomes and practice through **Coaching**.

Where possible, specialist teachers are utilised to enhance and maintain focus and standards within our curriculum delivery.

7. Links to Community and High Schools

The community plays an essential part in the St John's Curriculum. We actively promote the importance of dynamic partnership, involving parents and carers at every opportunity, focus on the importance of the learning environment and extend involvement into the local community, fostered through links with the PTA, Feeder High Schools and beyond.

8. Our Curriculum

The St John's Curriculum is unique to our children, and us. It has been designed around selected key Drivers: **Enquiry, Diversity & Possibility**, each one chosen specifically to suit the character and needs of St John's CE VA Primary School.

9. The EYFS Curriculum

9.1 Curriculum Design

The EYFS Curriculum is no different in the core **Intent** of the St John's Curriculum and holds firm to the principles of the School Vision outlined above.

Directed by the Statutory Framework for EYFS (2021) and informed by *Chris Quigley's Curriculum Companion for Early Years* (2021) the EYFS Curriculum is well-sequenced to enable children to meet the Early Learning Goals and prepare them for the rigours of the Key Stage 1 curriculum. It is based on the best available evidence into how children learn and the most effective practice in Early Years education.

9.2 EYFS Progression Framework

Provision is sequenced and taught across the seven areas of learning, as defined by the EYFS Statutory Framework (2025) - three **prime areas** and four **specific areas:**

Prime areas:

1. Communication and language
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Specific Areas:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

The EYFS Curriculum is also structured around **progression milestones**: N (Nursery), R1 (first half of Reception) and R2 (second half of Reception) which provide clear targets for development and reference.

Activity Provision centres around five core areas: learning experiences, continuous provision, outdoor environment, purposeful pedagogy and learning conversations. These activities gradually change in nature as children progress through the milestones towards the Early Learning Goals.

9.3 Assessment

Assessment is informed by the core principles of the Assessment Policy. (See the Assessment Policy for more details)

At its core though, Assessment should always be useful: informing planning and providing information that offers reliable feedback to parents as to how their children are progressing.

Importantly too, it should keep Teacher workload manageable.

10. Responsibilities of the Governing Body

As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the governing body should also make sure that:

- all pupils make progress in achieving the expected educational outcomes;
- the subjects are well led, effectively managed and well planned;
- the quality of provision is subject to regular and effective self-evaluation;
- teaching is delivered in ways that are accessible to all pupils with SEND;
- clear information is provided for parents on the subject content and the right to request that their child is withdrawn;
- the subjects are resourced, staffed and timetabled in a way that ensures that the school can fulfil its legal obligations.
- the religious ethos of the school is maintained and developed.

11. Linked Policies

Due to the focus and purpose of this policy, there are also direct and intrinsic links to the following:

- Assessment Policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Collective Worship Policy
- SMSC Policy
- RSE Policy
- Equalities Policy
- SEN Policy

Please also refer to those named policies for more comprehensive information.

This Policy is fluid and will be reviewed at least every two years; or earlier if required, in line with government legislation. The St John's CE VA Primary School Governing Body: Curriculum Committee is responsible for the monitoring and ratification of this Policy.

Mrs Heather Sheehan
Deputy Head & Curriculum Co-ordinator
March 2026

APPENDIX

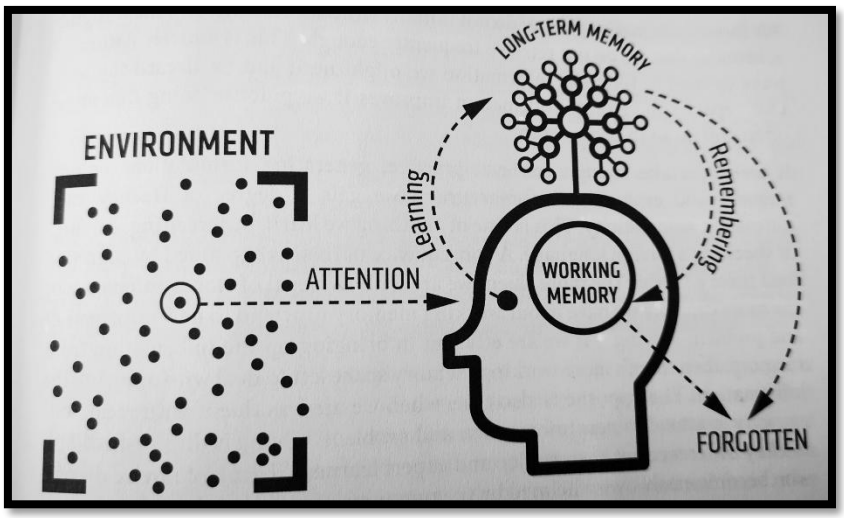
A1 Current Research & Practice:

Evidence from contemporary cognitive science research suggests that:

> …the use of 'metacognitive strategies' – which get pupils thinking about their own learning – can have an impact equivalent of an additional +7months' progress… (even higher for disadvantaged pupils.) …
>
> *Education Endowment Fund* (EEF) Metacognition & Self-Regulated Learning 2019

Using this research and understanding its' impact, has enabled Teaching Professionals to better facilitate the process of children's learning – beyond the abstract – implementing practical strategies that actively seek to build knowledge that sticks!

Understanding how memory works is fundamental to the research.



Conceptual information initially enters from the environment into our working memory. Working memory is finite and actually rather small, so we can only absorb a limited amount of information at once. We process information so that it is stored in our long-term memory. This is effectively unlimited, and we retrieve information back into our working memory as needed.

We organise information into schemata. Typically, new information is only stored if we can connect it to knowledge that we already have. As a result, prior knowledge is a major factor in our capacity to learn new information. The more complex and interconnected our schemata are, the easier it is to make sense of new related information and the better we are able to organise it so it make sense.

The concept of understanding is really 'memory in disguise' or that our schemata are more fully formed , are more interconnected, and can be explored and recalled more fluently.

If a schema contains incorrect information – a misconception or an incomplete model of how a process works – we cannot simply overwrite it. A more primitive schema can return to dominate unless we unpick and fully re-learn a correct schema.

We forget information that we do not initially store successfully in a meaningful schema or that we do not retrieve frequently enough. Our capacity to retrieve information improves if we practise doing this more often and do so in more depth. If we undertake enough retrieval practice, generating formulations of our memory and evaluating it for accuracy, we gain a degree of fluency and, ultimately automaticity. As a consequence of this, as explained by cognitive load theory, is that the more fluent we are with retrieval of stored information, the more capacity we have in our working memory to attend to new information and problem-solving.

A key implication of this is that novice learners need more practice than more confident, experienced learners.

It is upon this premise that the St John's Curriculum model rests.

A2 Rosenshine's Principles in Action

Rosenshine provides a highly accessible bridge between research and classroom practice. His ten Principles of Instruction, which in turn can be condensed into four strands, are interrelated and layered.

Principles

1. Daily review.
2. Present new material using small steps.
3. Ask questions.
4. Provide models.
5. Guide student practice.
6. Check for student understanding.

Four Strands

Sequencing concepts & modelling. (2.4. & 8)

Questioning. (3 & 6)

Reviewing material. (1 & 10)

7. Obtain a high success rate.
8. Provide scaffolds for difficult tasks.
9. Independent practice.
10. Weekly and monthly review.

Stages of practice. (5, 7 & 9)

REFERENCE

Sherrington, .T with Caviglioli, O. (2019) *Rosenshine's Principles in Action* John Catt

		Date
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