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ST. DAVID'S SCHOOL



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ST. DAVID'S SCHOOL



Curriculum Guide for Parents



THE CURRICULUM

An Overview

The Curriculum

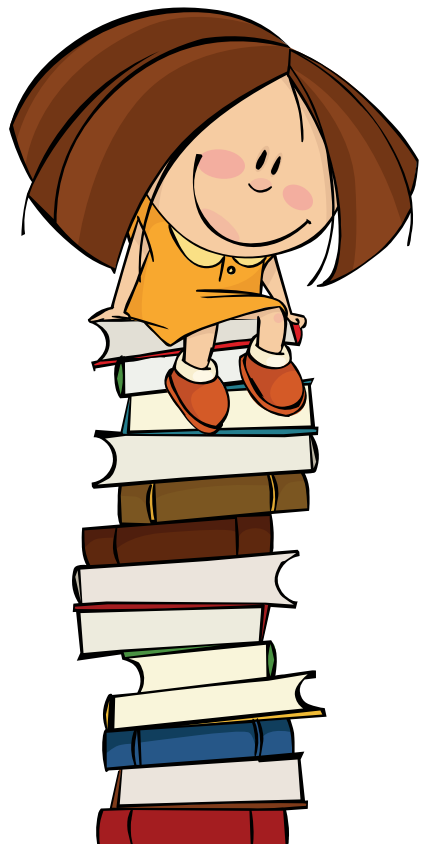
The curriculum is everything which is taught in schools. English, mathematics and science are known as core subjects because of their importance. The other subjects are known as foundation subjects and include history, geography, religious studies, design technology (which covers subjects such as woodwork and needlework), food technology, ICT (information and communication technology – the use of computers) art, music and physical education. Some primary schools may teach a foreign language (usually, but not always French) to older pupils, as well as Latin.

When a child attends school, teachers have three main aims. First, they seek to develop the basic skills that allow a child to learn other subjects. Developing these skills is a major task for the teachers and because of this English and Mathematics tend to occupy a major part of the time in primary schools.

Second, the teachers introduce the young children to a range of interesting work in the other subjects, providing a foretaste of the curriculum to come and arousing their curiosity.

Finally, they seek to develop positive attitudes to school and learning, and the ability to work with other children.

The policy of promoting the basic skills of literacy and numeracy as a priority is an area



in which parents can support their children at home. This can be achieved by encouraging regular reading and making practical number work a regular part of home life.

The Difference between Curriculum and Syllabus

The Curriculum provides the general goals to be achieved by all children at a particular age, and the overall view of work covered in individual subjects. For example, it is the requirement of the English Curriculum that we should maintain a balance between creative work (drama, poetry) and structured work (essays, comprehension). The syllabus is the detailed programme of studies in each subject at each level, structured towards the requirements of examinations.



THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Its Role

Before the 1988 Education Reform Act, what was taught in schools was largely up to the teachers who worked there. In practice this meant that a school's curriculum was drawn from a mixture of tradition, habit and prejudice. The Act created a framework which has since evolved into the National Curriculum, stating which subjects should be taught in schools, when, and to what standard.

The National Curriculum was revised in 1995 and has again been updated as from September 2000. Curriculum 2000 now fulfils the need for a simple and easily understood system providing a universal description of what is to be taught in schools. Schools in the independent sector are not under any obligation to follow the National Curriculum. Generally, however, they do so, regarding it as specifying the minimum educational content for their pupils.

The term Early Years Foundation Stage is used to describe the phase of education from a child's second birthday to the end of the reception year. The early learning goals set out what most children are expected to achieve by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The early learning goals are broadly equivalent to Level 1 of the National Curriculum.

The National Curriculum is divided into four 'Key Stages' of development. Key Stage 1

begins at 5 (referred to as Form 1 at St. David's School, Year 1 in the state sector); Key Stage 2 spans the ages 7-11; Key Stage 3 tests are carried out at 14, and Key Stage 4 at 16.

The syllabus in each subject is made up from 'programmes of study' published and regularly reviewed by the DCSF in conjunction with QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) which describes in detail what pupils should be taught in each year. Programmes of study set out the skills children should be developing and practising, the content they are expected to learn and the concepts they must master. They do not say how the subjects should be taught – that is for the teachers to decide.

We cover all the National Curriculum subject material and much more besides, so that we are in tune with the rest of the country and are completely up-to-date educationally.

Academic Approach

Learning should be fun and inspirational. We use a variety of different methods and resources to enable us to achieve this aim.

At St. David's we use both whole-class and group methods of teaching and classroom organisation. The traditional whole-class ("chalk and talk") approach from a

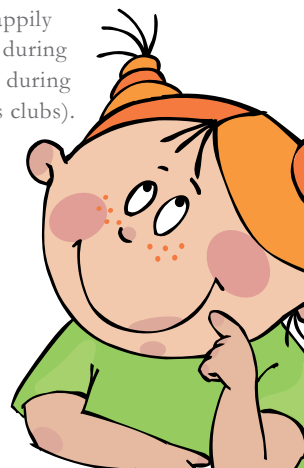


whiteboard is appropriate in many situations and is used at all levels. Group work is also used, especially at lower levels, as an alternative. As children progress through the school, group work tends to be used more for specific project based work.

We have excellent resources at all levels throughout the school. The use of computers and ICT is integrated throughout the curriculum providing a valuable extra dimension to our subject programme. Audio-visual equipment is used as an essential part of the programme, especially in areas such as languages. Oral work – singing, role playing, visits to theatres, galleries and so on – helps us to engage the children’s interest, thus enriching the curriculum and firing their imagination.

The Staff

Our staff are all highly qualified and dedicated, enabling us to achieve our curriculum’s high standards. They have a wide range of interests and talents which they expect to share happily with the children both during timetabled lessons and during extra activities (such as clubs). Teachers are encouraged to use their individual talents and strengths during their lessons in order to add greater depth and knowledge to their teaching.



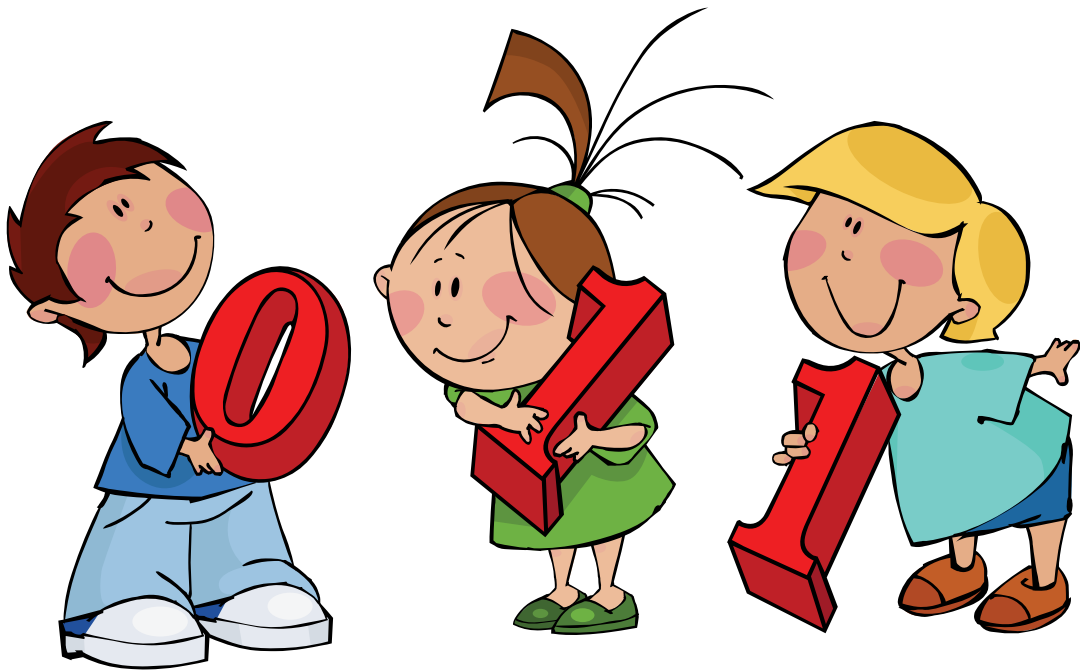


The Role of the Form Teachers/Pastoral Care at St. David's

St. David's is a caring school. It has a comprehensive pastoral system which commences as soon as a child begins in the school and lasts until the minute he or she leaves. Any problem, whether academic or otherwise, may be discussed with a child's form teacher at any time. Parents also meet with their child's teachers on parents' evenings as well as communicating by correspondence if the need arises.

Discipline

The school reinforces good behavioural patterns learned at home and adds to these by introducing the children to peer-group socialisation concepts. Children are encouraged to work hard and to be polite and helpful. Small



class sizes enable the teachers to maximise individual attention to each child and to make sure the children are listening. Individuality is encouraged, but not at the expense of others.

Learning Support

One learning support teacher is on hand to help with children who need extra help at any time in their career. Many children have weaknesses in their overall academic performance; such problems are usually transitory and probably do not indicate a serious specific learning difficulty which might require a different kind of help.

If a problem is suspected the teacher will recommend to parents that the special needs teacher undertakes an assessment. Parents then meet the special needs teacher and discuss the child's strengths and weaknesses. A programme of individual lessons may be suggested and parents are given regular reports. Our specialist works closely with the form teachers.

Assessment and Reporting

During their time at St. David's children are subjected to constant internal assessments and reporting procedures.

Assessment is carried out through observations and testing in class time, and by internal exams which take place during the Autumn and Summer Terms. Parents are informed about their child's progress at parent-teacher evenings and by formal end of term reports.

There are two parent-teacher evenings. These are individual appointments of 10 minutes with the form teachers or subject teachers as appropriate.

End of term reports are sent out during the last week of the Spring and Summer Terms for all children. These contain report slips with comments on each subject, written by the form teacher or subject specialist as appropriate.



If a parent has a query that needs more immediate attention then they may come in and speak at any time to the Head, Deputy or Form Teacher by appointment.

A final word on reporting: teachers' assessments are made professionally and impersonally and take into account knowledge of hundreds of other children by reference to the norm. We cannot always be right; equally, we cannot fix a problem we do not know about. If we have something good or bad to say, then we will say it, and the parent will be the first to know if we think there is a persistent problem.

After St. David's

It is important that parents start to think about their choice of next school well in advance.

We have a well-tryed system for discussing and assisting with this process.

Entrance examinations to senior schools

We prepare the children for entrance into the senior schools of their choice. In addition we are required to write a full report and recommendation for each child. This report is often crucial to a child's acceptance by the school of his/her choice.

The curriculum we follow provides a broad and balanced programme to an extremely high standard. It reflects the aims of education in general which hold good for all children whatever their capabilities, allowing for differences between children of the same



age or class level. We make sure that we cater for both ends of the ability range by matching tasks to children and by balancing challenges with the likelihood of success for each pupil across the ability range. We achieve this by varying teaching approaches and classroom organisation.

Parents' Role – How can you help?

The parents' role is to support at home what we do here at school and take an interest in what your child is achieving. That's all! – We don't expect parents to become heavily involved with the minutiae of the learning process; we do expect them to leave their child's education to us and let us get on with it. If there are any problems they will be told soon enough

(and please remember that not every child is a genius!). Otherwise, trust us – we know what we are doing.

There are a very few specific things we ask of parents:





Read Young Puffin

Read Young Puffin's story of Geraldine the frog who gets lucky and wins a prize. This is a story about a little frog who is very lucky. She wins a prize for being so lucky. She is a very lucky frog.



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Read Young Puffin
Geraldine Gets Lucky
Richard Linnell
Illustrated by Jane Yolen



- Make sure children come to school every day and do not arrive late;
- Avoid absence for trivial reasons;
- Read the homework diaries every day;
- Ask children constantly for school letters and notices being sent home;
- Try to have a set time for homework. Help as much as you can with the rote learning aspects of homework – it makes all the difference;
- Insist children behave properly. If something is not acceptable at school, it should not be acceptable at home.



In Forms 1 and 2 all homework is done at home. It generally consists of reading and spelling in Form 1. Form 2 enjoy a wider variety of homework assignments associated with their class work.

In addition to set homework, some assignments may need to be completed at home, perhaps to finish off work, catch up on missed work or redo something poorly done.

In addition to weekday homework the children will also have some weekend work to do. Weekend work should amount to no more than half an hour per assignment.

In Conclusion

We have, we hope, given you an idea of our principles and practices, and detailed information as to how we go about your children's education. We are an independent school and we do not have to suffer vague prescriptions in method, but we do have a duty to cover the National Curriculum and the Common Entrance syllabuses. We do this guided by strong educational principles and, in doing so, aim to make your child happy and able to find something at school which is enjoyable, fulfilling and rewarding.

THE CURRICULUM

English

Our aims and objectives in the teaching of English at St. David's are that the children shall understand, speak, write and appreciate the language in all its various uses, especially in the fields of:

- Essay writing;
- Comprehension;
- Poetry;
- Stories;
- Analytical stores.

Furthermore, we encourage children to

- Appreciate a wide variety of literature;
- Learn to use and recognise language appropriate to the purpose for which it is intended, be it, for example, in journalism, advertising or instructional writing;
- Learn to enjoy the richness of the English language and appreciate the relationship between language and culture.

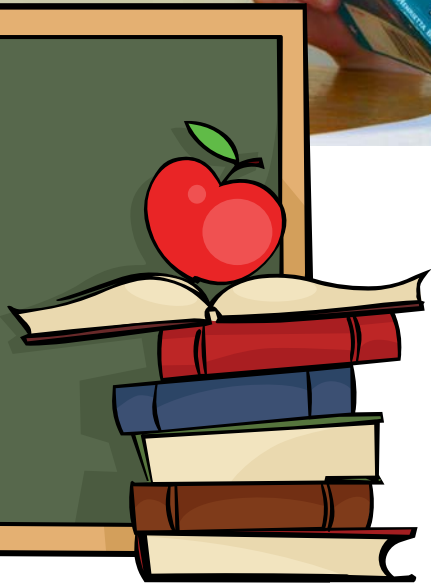
We place strong emphasis on the importance of grammar, spelling, planning of a piece of work, checking, punctuation, paragraphing and presentation. Within that framework we look for creative, imaginative and thoughtful use of the language. In order to boost self-confidence



we encourage effort and enthusiasm in both written and oral work.

Drama

We consider drama to be an important ancillary part of the curriculum and therefore the children are positively encouraged to become involved in



all aspects of this diverse and exciting subject.

Each year the children:

- Take part in various productions;
- Take part in role play;
- Take part in class assemblies.

Our approach is to:

- Stimulate imagination;
- Encourage individuality of response;
- Interact;
- Develop confidence and so help to overcome nerves;
- Enhance sympathy and tolerance;
- Afford an understanding of some of the issues of adult life;
- Develop the skill of self expression;
- Learn and understand the traditions and the skills involved in theatre.

Mathematics

The primary aims and objectives in mathematics are to develop a full range of skills and knowledge, to cover the syllabus relevant to the end of the year targets, school examination or entrance test a children might be taking, and to cover additional material required to meet the needs of the National Curriculum. Further we aim to:

- Make mathematics interesting and enjoyable to children of all abilities;



- Challenge more able pupils;
- Support less able pupils and fill in the gaps in their knowledge;
- Use as wide a variety of resources as possible.

Our supplementary objectives are as follows:

That the children will...

- Learn to work individually and co-operatively in pairs or in groups;
- Become proficient in the application of mathematics to uses in everyday life;



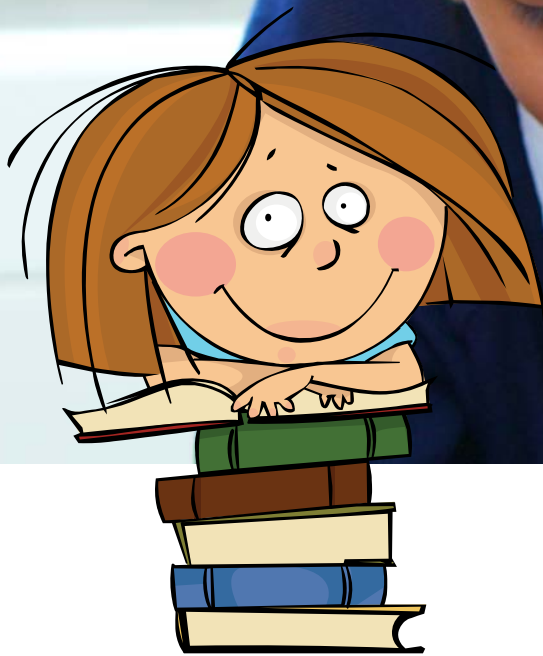
- Come aware of the purposes of mathematics;
- Develop an ability to think precisely, logically and creatively;
- Learn to communicate effectively using mathematical language;
- Learn to check their own written work for mistakes;
- Become confident in the calculator and computer skills.

Science

The aim of the science curriculum is to give children a relevant and appropriate understanding of scientific knowledge linked with the skills needed to carry out scientific investigations.

We have the following objectives:

- To encourage children to ask questions about everyday occurrences;



- To carry out investigations using the notion of fair testing, and thus to foster scientific skills as well as to impart knowledge;
- To interpret their results and to suggest ways of evaluating their investigation;
- To encourage them to present all their work clearly and succinctly;
- To adopt an investigative approach to science and thus to become aware of, and start to understand, the workings of the world in which they live;
- To use the correct scientific vocabulary.

History

The aim of the history curriculum is to learn about the past and to foster an enjoyment in the study and appreciation of events in the past. This is done by introducing children to the process by which historians discover the past. Children are encouraged to study primary and secondary sources in their investigations.

Objectives in the teaching of the subject within the curriculum include:

- Making children aware that events in history need to be interpreted, that there is not necessarily one right answer;
- Enriching the social and intellectual development of each child through the consideration of economic, social and cultural questions in terms of cause and effect, change and continuity;



- Teaching children to develop the ability to express their thoughts in a logical manner stressing the importance of supporting arguments with hard evidence.
- Teaching children about the physical nature of landscapes and the people and processes working within such landscapes.

Geography

Geography encompasses, very broadly, the study of the earth and its inhabitants, its physical and human elements, and includes the study of such things as natural hazards, weather, map work, human demography and the environment.

Aims and objectives within the curriculum include:

- Encouraging children to develop a range of geographical skills and knowledge;
- Giving them a wide perception of both their local and a broader environment;

French

Children begin French in the Nursery. As they progress through the school instruction becomes more formal and grammatically based, although the emphasis on spoken French is certainly not discarded.

Aims and objectives include:

- Teaching French for purposes of practical communication in and out of the classroom;
- Instilling a love of language regardless of level of ability;



- Establishing an awareness of the language learning process which, in turn, will help in the learning of other languages;
- Encouraging a love and understanding of France and its people;
- Encouraging further study of French.

Latin

Latin is taught in Form 6. Aims and objectives include:

- Encouraging children to view the subject as an excellent discipline;
- Teaching children that Latin is the only entirely logical language in existence and making them aware that Latin provides a knowledge about language structure which no other language provides;

- Giving children an insight into the life of the early Roman Empire;
- Covering the three main areas of grammar, syntax and vocabulary.

RE (Religious Education)

At St. David's religious education has the same status and importance as any other subject, and the same high standards are applied. We aim to give children a basic understanding of the Bible and Christianity. We also try to:

- Help pupils understand religious beliefs and practices, in order that they may form their own beliefs, judgments, allegiances and commitments;
- Develop spiritual awareness and aesthetic appreciation, and foster respect for the environment;
- Take account of the principles and practices of all the main religions, whilst reflecting the fact that Christianity is the principal religious tradition of our society;
- Engender a positive attitude to other people, respecting their right to different beliefs, and to develop the tolerance required for life in a society of diverse religions.

Stories, discussions, debates, and questions and answers are all part of a typical RE lesson, with written work and drawings being used to record information and ideas. In addition we have daily assemblies.





Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) aims to develop qualities and values in pupils so that they are more able to understand themselves and others in a wide variety of situations, and be able to recognise their responsibilities within society as a whole.

Facts will be taught so that pupils are better informed to make judgments and choices. Concepts will be developed which are fundamental to a liberal and democratic society. Skills will be acquired which are vital to personal well-being. Attitudes will be developed on a range of personal, social and moral issues.

Lessons are planned within themed topics to ensure progression throughout the school, and a variety of teaching methods are employed to ensure pupil involvement, interest and motivation.

Sport

Physical education and sport play an important part in the lives of the children both on site and off site. By providing numerous opportunities for children to participate in physical activity we hope to teach them that exercise is conducive to a healthy lifestyle. The physical education programme will help the children to develop their cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, muscle strength, endurance and co-ordination.



The importance of individual achievement is stressed, so that children learn to build on their successes and work hard to improve their performance.

All pupils will become familiar with the concepts of fair play, house competitions and good sporting behaviour, as an individual participant, as a team member and as a spectator. Children are taught to understand and follow necessary rules, etiquette and safety procedures for various activities.

On a more basic level, they will learn the importance of warming up and warming down before and after exercises, and the benefits of such practices.

We teach a wide variety of sports, which include swimming, football, rugby, netball, athletics, dance, gymnastics, rounders and cricket.

Art and Design and Design Technology (DT)

Art teaches children how to look and describe.

It allows them to express what they see and feel in an individual way.

There are two main aims in teaching art and DT:

- Observation – developing children’s ability to describe what they see and experience;
- Confidence building – encouraging them to express their reaction to their experiences.

At St. David’s a wide range of materials, skills and techniques make these goals possible to achieve:

- Drawing in various media is crucial to art and design development and this is part of an ongoing programme of work;
- Picture making and compositional skills are developed through still life, landscape, interior and portrait experiences as well as abstract imaginative work;
- Appreciation of colour, tone, shape, form and pattern are part of the curriculum;

- Introductions to artists and designers including visits to galleries and museums;
- Construction using ceramics, plaster, wire, plastic and other materials are experienced by the children as well as graphic skills such as printing and lettering and textile work;
- Batik, silk painting, felt making and others are enjoyed and developed.

At the end of Form 6, the children have had the chance to experiment widely and have the confidence to make appropriate choices to express their ideas.

Food Technology

The pupils cover work that involve taste testing, planning recipes, making food and evaluating the success of the product made. Developing life skills and an awareness of health and safety in a kitchen are key components of food technology.

Food technology is integrated with many other areas of the curriculum. For example weights and measures in maths, healthy eating in science and foods from the past in history.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

ICT as ‘computer science’ is taught to all children at St. David’s from Form 1 onwards within a formal, timetabled lesson each week. As they get older children are encouraged to use ICT, where appropriate, in other subjects. We aim to ensure that children are computer literate

by the time they leave so that they can use common application software, such as spreadsheets, that they understand what they are doing when they use them, and they understand what a computer is doing. This helps children decide how and when to use computers.



Music

Music plays an important part throughout the school and all pupils are given the opportunity to become involved in musical activities. Aims and objectives include:

- Having a working knowledge of the elements and theory of music;
- Having confidence in performing music, whether vocally or instrumentally;
- Having an understanding of the music of other times and other places;
- Enjoying music and having the desire to continue doing so in future life.

Lessons usually take place in the music room and consist of singing, playing classroom instruments, rhythmic and pitch-reinforcing games, and simple composition. Pupils from Forms 2 to 6 are also given the opportunity to have individual tuition on an orchestral instrument or for singing. This leads to involvement in the choirs and instrumental groups that play an important part in the life of the school.

All pupils are actively encouraged to demonstrate their musical skills and achievements in concerts and as part of our daily assemblies.

