

## Curriculum Design and Essential Principles

Whilst our schools are given a certain amount of creative autonomy as local experts to plan their curriculum and decide how knowledge is taught, there are some key requirements which schools should align with:

- All schools have devised a Curriculum<sup>1</sup> Intent, Implementation and Impact Statement, which is published on their website, for the curriculum as a whole and for each subject
- Religious Education<sup>2</sup> is at the heart of our curriculum, informing every aspect it
- The curriculum also reflects the aims and ambition of the National Curriculum
- Schools follow the Diocesan RSE Policy and guidelines
- Each school's curriculum reflects the [Trust Curriculum Overview](#), as well as the Trust's Mission Statement and Aims
- As well as meeting statutory requirements, the curriculum is accessible to all children
- Trust essential curriculum principles (below) inform each school's curriculum design
- As well as academic rigour, spiritual growth, personal development and health & wellbeing are at the heart of the curriculum
- Schools offer the full range of core and foundation subjects in recognition of the importance of breadth of experience in building pupils' knowledge of the world, cultural literacy and vocabulary
- A strong commitment to the arts and sport is evident, as well as providing children with access to high-quality enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities
- The curriculum will enable pupils to become effective global citizens, by promoting and celebrating diversity and broadening children's knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the wider world
- Across the breadth of the curriculum schools inspire pupils to think and act like scientists, historians etc. by exploring examples of significant human creative, innovative and paradigm-breaking thinking and achievements
- Reading and vocabulary development are prioritised as the gateway to the curriculum and disciplinary literacy and mathematical thinking is enhanced through each subject
- Leaders at all levels collaborate and participate in Trust Professional Learning Networks (PLNs), where leaders meet together to share knowledge and practice, innovate and develop new ideas

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<sup>1</sup> Curriculum – what will be taught and what children will learn at each stage in their learning

<sup>2</sup> RECD 2012, RED 2023 from Sep 2025

## Essential Curriculum Principles

Through professional learning, research and collaboration our schools have identified some essential principles that guide our thinking in planning and refining each school's curriculum:

### Intent

- Defined **curriculum drivers**, which reflect the aims, values, context and pedagogical approaches of our schools, underpin and shape the curriculum to ensure children are given appropriate and ambitious opportunities
- All pupils are entitled to a **knowledge-rich curriculum**, which will enable them to understand and interpret the world they live in, as well as to think in new and unexpected ways
- The curriculum embraces and values the most powerful knowledge from a variety of cultures and traditions, which introduces pupils to new experiences and knowledge beyond the classroom and the local environment, to broaden their horizons and enhance pupils' **cultural capital**, opening doors for them and equipping them to lead successful and fulfilling lives
- Pupils' acquisition and command of **ambitious vocabulary** is key to their learning and progress across the curriculum
- Each curriculum is **coherently planned** and **carefully sequenced** to build upon prior learning, make conscious connections and lead towards **sustained mastery** and **deeper understanding** of ideas and concepts
- Clearly defined **threshold concepts**<sup>3</sup> tie together the specific subject conceptual and procedural knowledge into meaningful and progressive schema. These threshold concepts are revisited continuously throughout the curriculum to build conceptual understanding and help children assimilate new information into growing schema, as well as shaping pupils as historians, scientists, artists...etc.
- Essential knowledge, skills and vocabulary are clearly defined for the end of units or milestones and are broken down into a carefully sequenced, **component steps** of learning
- **Knowledge organisers/booklets** define the essential knowledge and help learners relate each topic to previously studied topics, providing opportunities for knowledge retrieval
- **Cognitive demand and challenge** develop over time as learners acquire, explore and deepen their knowledge and understanding. Learners gradually progress in their procedural fluency and semantic strength by practising and applying their knowledge and skills in a range of contexts, moving from guided to independent practice

### Implementation

- **High expectations and ambition for all** within calm, supportive, inclusive and productive learning environments support the implementation of the curriculum

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<sup>3</sup> Ideas that are so central to understanding a particular topic that pupils can't progress further until they have fully understood them

- Systematic and detailed curriculum plans for each milestone, year group or subject, ensure **coherence, progressive sequencing and clarity**
- Vision Statements for each subject ensure that each subject is given high status - the specifics of what children should learn and the **disciplines of subject traditions** are respected
- The curriculum is designed to be **remembered and stored in long-term memory**, so that pupils can build upon it later and form more detailed schema. Therefore, the curriculum embraces learning from cognitive science, with the following principles underpinning it:
  - Learning is most effective with **spaced repetition**, rather than blocked - key concepts and ideas are revisited across subjects and over time through vertical and horizontal planning
  - **Retrieval** of previously learned content is frequent and regular, which supports the acquisition of knowledge into **long term memory**

In addition, we also appreciate that sustained mastery takes time

- Schools have clearly defined, **evidenced-informed pedagogical models**, aligned to the Trust Teaching & Learning Model, which support the effective implementation of the curriculum through **excellent teaching**. These models emphasise mastery supported by responsive teaching
- Curriculum content and teaching approaches are subject specific to maintain the **disciplinary authenticity**. Intra-curricular links are made to strengthen schema, where appropriate
- Schools deliberately promote, teach and model **metacognitive and self-regulation** skills in conjunction with specific subject content, to support access to the curriculum (e.g. from guided to independent practice using 'I do - we do - you do' approach)
- In addition to strong teaching, pupils receive **high-quality evidenced-based interventions** when appropriate
- The Trust's CPD Model supports the evidence-informed **professional development** of staff, developing strong subject and pedagogical expertise

## Impact

- Pupils have **acquired and remembered the intended powerful knowledge** - the carefully planned curriculum is the progression model
- Pupils have **sustained mastery** - fluency in procedural knowledge and strong, conceptual understanding – they make connections and use it to explore, innovate and create
- Self-aware, resilient and resourceful learners, who embrace challenge and learning from mistakes and have a thirst for learning
- Learners are self-aware, have well-formed characters, a thirst for knowledge and embrace challenge
- Individuals who demonstrate Gospel values in action
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed – e.g. the Trust has developed a Curriculum Deep Dive tool for school leaders to use to review and evaluate elements of curriculum provision

# SJB CMAT Curriculum Overview

## St John the Baptist Catholic Multi Academy Trust Curriculum Overview



