

Curriculum Intent, Implementation and Impact

School Context

St. John's CE Academy is situated in an area of high deprivation (top 10% in the country). A very low percentage of our parents have accessed further or higher education and many express negative personal experiences of school and their own abilities. Many parents are in low skilled/low paid employment or are unemployed and aspirations are often low. Locally, there is a high percentage of teenage pregnancy and of drug and alcohol abuse. There are incidents around domestic violence and child protection, including children placed in care, and a high incidence of mental health issues. Vulnerable families rely on, and indeed expect, school to support them with their issues at home: parenting skills and healthy relationships; communication skills especially in relation to involvement with other agencies; conflict management and financial hardship.

Curriculum Intent

Our mission 'Trust in God. Trust in Yourself. Aspire, Believe, Achieve' is at the core of everything we do. We recruit staff who are passionate about education and making a difference in our community to ensure that our children get the very best educational provision and opportunities to discover and then pursue their talents. In order that every child has the opportunity to shine, staff go the 'extra mile', reaching beyond curriculum expectations and what is typically provided. This is evident in our curriculum enrichment, high levels of pastoral care and extra-curricular provision which is free of charge. Our passion is reflected in the children who speak with energy and enthusiasm about their school and their learning. High levels of engagement result in the vast majority having high levels of attendance and attainment above national averages despite significantly low starting points.

Because of our context, the development of successful relationships between all stakeholders is crucial. We work relentlessly to develop positive relationships with parents where they have confidence in us and our intentions so that we can alleviate their anxieties and sometimes negative attitudes towards school and education. Our families speak highly of our warm and welcoming environment and appreciate our high expectations and efforts to ensure their children are happy, safe and reach their full potential. We model positive and respectful relationships and support children to develop them, while recognising and avoiding unhealthy ones.

Through our curriculum we express consistently high expectations and raise aspirations relating to education, the world of work and social mobility in an attempt to break generational cycles so that our children are aware of the vast range of opportunities open to them. We provide children with positive learning experiences and, through appropriate support and challenge, feelings of accomplishment. Each day we encourage our children to work hard, have a positive mind-set, have the confidence to make mistakes, persevere in order to succeed and to feel good about themselves. We acknowledge the demonstration of desired learning behaviours and of our Christian values and involve parents in these celebrations. This serves as a means of reinforcing high expectations, key messages and desired outcomes with our families. We lift aspirations and demonstrate how we value hard work and effort while we model positive behaviour and relationships.

At St. John's, the curriculum is regularly reviewed to meet the needs of our children, families and local community. All curriculum developments are rooted in Christian values to promote spiritual and moral development and personal, social and health education and are given high priority so that children will be well equipped to face their future. We respond to findings from school data and pupil feedback to ensure our curriculum is bespoke to children's needs. In response to our school context and issues raised in the 'Healthy Lifestyles' questionnaire, our curriculum raises awareness about the importance of a 'healthy lifestyle' and support children to take individual responsibility for this as they get older. A continued high focus on sport and activity will promote the benefits of this not only on physical health but also on mental well-being. We are one of the few schools to have a Platinum Award for promoting sport and activity. Helping children to make informed decisions about their lifestyle choices and to keep themselves safe will be paramount.

We ensure that children are ready for their next phase of education by focusing on a high standard of basic skills within a broad, exciting curriculum with knowledge and vocabulary at its heart so that the vast majority of children achieve at least age related expectations. We use every opportunity to help children develop as confident communicators who can acquire and use wide ranging, high quality vocabulary.

Through creating and maintaining links with the local community children have a greater sense of their place within it and a fuller understanding of how they can make a difference. Our children are regularly involved in programmes to improve their community eg raising money for charity and to purchase a defibrillator, designing and making improvements to the local park and reducing the amount of plastic in school. Our local MP recently nominated our Y6 children for a 'Pride of Darlington – Service to the Community' award for raising awareness in our families about the dangers surrounding on-line gaming. Four members of our staff were once pupils here and as such are a source of pride to us.

To facilitate equity and equality of opportunity, we work to diminish differences so that all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, can have choices about their future and achieve success. We are an inclusive school where everyone is valued as part of our school family: those of different faiths and none; those from a range of cultures and ethnicity and those who have experienced social and emotional challenges. To support this, we develop a consistency of approach throughout school in order that children feel safe and secure while providing flexible provision and personalisation when it is necessary to allow children full access to learning. We have very few exclusions. Our children readily welcome all newcomers to our school and demonstrate tolerance and compassion towards each other, especially children with learning or social and emotional needs.

The experiences that we consider to be 'childhood essentials' are planned throughout the school and include a residential visit. These experiences raise awareness of the local area and our cultural heritage, provide engaging and relevant purposes for reading and writing and build cultural capital. For example, in Year 1 the children take a train ride to a Victorian seaside resort during which they learn about George Stephenson, the role of Darlington in the development of the railways and enjoy a trip to the beach while in Year 5 the children will undertake a Victorian town trail to consolidate and extend knowledge about Quaker families and their influence in developing Darlington and enjoy a picnic in South Park.

We want our children to thrive and leave us as confident and resilient individuals who will make a positive contribution to their local community and the wider world. We strongly believe that children should know God's love and be able to show God's love and our children access many opportunities to do this through charitable giving of their choice, supporting community initiatives such as food banks, Christmas boxes for vulnerable children and visits to our nearby residential home for the elderly.



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