

# ST MARGARET WARD CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Curriculum Policy



*Let us remember we are in the presence of God "*

Policy Adopted	Next Review	Author
	January 2019	S Bennion

Agreed by Governors	Date
	January 2018

# St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy Curriculum Policy

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## Rationale

The curriculum includes students' whole learning experience during their time at St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy. We ensure that curriculum development is on-going and that all those involved understand the principles which underpin decisions regarding the curriculum. This policy reflects the aims and values of our academy and is based on a set of principles that lie at the heart of any learning centred school:

- All students are entitled to a broad, balanced, coherent, relevant and personalised curriculum that meets their individual needs and provides them with appropriate qualifications in and for the future
- The learning process should be engaging, motivating, exciting and allow students to achieve, as well as developing lively, imaginative and enquiring minds and God given talent
- All students will be given the opportunity to be creative and take risks with their learning, in a supportive, yet challenging environment
- All students should have full access to the curriculum, irrespective of gender, SEN, ethnicity, academic ability, social or cultural background
- The curriculum should develop active citizens, both within the academy and the wider community
- Students should be well prepared for their future careers through the development of independent thought, self-reliance and a questioning approach
- The curriculum should, at all times, encourage high expectations and aspirations and allow all students to be the best they can be in whatever aspect they are called to serve

## Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the **Directors** to:

- regularly review the academy curriculum and make any amendments to reflect students' needs
- have an overview of local and national developments that may have an impact on the curriculum
- understand the necessity for strong progression routes; this should include effective transition from primary school, progression from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 and into Key Stage 5, employment, training and Higher Education
- have an understanding of the curriculum model and the impact that this has on student progress and achievement, as well as staffing and the school budget

It is the responsibility of the **Principal and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)** to:

- review the curriculum annually, making changes in response to any local or national initiatives that will maximise student learning and achievement
- ensure that our students fulfil their potential to become fully human in light of Church teaching and our guiding principles of St Jean Baptiste de la Salle
- keep abreast of local and national changes and apply these as appropriate
- ensure the curriculum allows clear progression through all key stages
- monitor curriculum impact on achievement, learning and progress and adapt as necessary in order to maximise these
- have a broad understanding of the curriculum in the subjects they line manage
- ensure that the curriculum model leads to a timetable that supports learning

It is the responsibility of the **Directors of Learning and Achievement (DLAs)** to:

- monitor the curriculum developments in their subject area and implement these in discussion with SLT line managers
- design and implement a curriculum that ensures student progression within the subject and meets the principles set out in this policy, enabling opportunities to become a fully developed person in Christ
- monitor the impact of the curriculum on standards of student learning and progress
- keep abreast of changes which impact on the curriculum at a local and national level
- support the devising of the timetable within their subject
- ensure that the academy's teaching and learning policy is adhered to at all times

It is the responsibility of all **teachers** to:

- deliver the curriculum in line with the academy's teaching and learning policy and their subject area's schemes of learning
- differentiate and personalise the curriculum to allow all students, through choice and/or appropriately levelled work, to access the learning at the appropriate level
- plan lessons which ensure students make at least expected progress

In line with our equality policy, we aim to provide all students with a curriculum that meets their needs, and to ensure that access to the right curriculum does not depend on a student's prior attainment, gender, ethnicity, social or cultural background or religion. In designing the curriculum we consider all students to be equal.

### **Principles of curriculum design at St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy (SMW)**

St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy aims to provide a curriculum for all of our students that meets our statutory obligations. Our timetable spans 5 days, with each day consisting of six fifty minute lessons. We operate a flexible system of allocation to teaching groups that is

designed to cater for both the abilities of individual students and the differing requirements of subjects.

### **Key Stage 3** (years 7 to 8 inclusive)

From the beginning of Key Stage 3, we offer a broad and balanced curriculum, providing all students with opportunities to gain knowledge, understanding and to maximise their potential so that they can become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens serving others. Building on young people's experiences from the primary phase, we offer the full range of National Curriculum subjects, including Religious Education as a core subject for all. Literacy, including reading, and Numeracy are an important aspect of our curriculum as are "attitudes for life" whereby students evaluate their readiness for learning and know how to improve their approach to both school and life beyond the classroom.

Specifically, our Key Stage 3 experience aims to:

- support and nurture all young people to be the best they can be and lead in all aspects of their lives
- achieve high standards and encourage progress
- develop independent learners
- challenge and motivate
- encourage aspiration, ambition and participation
- develop skills, knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects and initiatives

In years 7 and 8 all students study:

Art and Design, Dance, Drama, English, English Literature, Geography, History, ICT, Mathematics, Modern Foreign Languages, Music, Physical Education, Religious Education, Science and Technology (Graphics, Food Technology, Product Design and Electronics).

Students are placed in sets according to their abilities in some subjects, whilst others are taught on a mixed ability basis. Levels of attainment provided by the primary schools and our own early baseline assessment data, allows us to place students in appropriate groups and teaching and learning to be tailored to the needs of individuals from the beginning of year 7.

### **Key Stage 4** (years 9, 10 and 11)

At Key Stage 4, there is an opportunity for students to broaden their experiences and choose from a range of academic and vocational courses most suitable to their needs and aspirations, including the English Baccalaureate. "Attitudes for life" continue to be taught so that students learn effectively and become successful learners.

From year 9, more personalised opportunities become available, helping students make informed choices about the subjects they wish to pursue to a higher level, as well as providing them with greater academic and vocational breadth.

All students in years 9, 10 and 11 study English language and Literature, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education at GCSE, together with a core entitlement to Physical Education. We encourage and support our students in achieving good GCSE grades in subjects that will allow them to meet the Progress 8 measure and qualify for the English Baccalaureate, where appropriate.

In addition to the compulsory element of the curriculum, students can also choose to follow further courses that match their interests, skills and aspirations. Courses may be drawn from the following:

Art & Design, Business Studies, Catering, Computer Science, Dance, Drama, Electronics, French, Geography, German, Graphics, Health and Social Care, History, Music, Performing Arts, Physical Education, Product Design, ASDAN/COPE and Triple Science.

### **Vocational Education**

There are some school based optional courses at Key Stage 4 that have a strong vocational focus, including BTEC Health and Social Care, BTEC Performing Arts, ASDAN/COPE, NCFE Level 1 and 2 qualifications and OCR Technical qualifications. Students who express a desire to take part in even more practical, vocational courses may be considered for a place at a local college on a day release basis in order to complete Level 1/Level 2 courses. There are very limited funded places available to schools, and costs for these courses are high. In the event that we have more requests from students for these courses than places available we will judge every application on merit. The key considerations will be:

- the ability of the student to access Level 2 courses on offer in school
- the ability of the college to support any specific learning needs of the student
- the student's prior attainment as colleges may apply criteria for entry to Level 1/Level 2 courses
- the student's record regarding completion of independent study and his/her ability to represent the academy in a suitable manner

### **The Options process**

Students selecting their Key Stage 4 courses are provided with course details via the "options booklet" which is distributed at the start of the options process. An options CAIG day, an assembly and a parents' evening also form part of the process. Responsibility for providing additional advice lies with year 8 tutors, the year 8 Learning and Progress Manager, the CAIG team and the Senior Leaders in charge of year 8 and the curriculum.

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All students in year 8 complete an options survey identifying their initial preferences for Key Stage 4 subjects. This includes making a choice from a “Progress 8” option block which involves making a selection to study GCSE History, Geography, French, German or Computer Science.

The outcomes from this survey are used to construct timetable blocks. The number of classes (in each subject) and the range of subjects in each block are designed to maximise the number of students who can study all of their preferred subjects dependent on their suitability for the courses they have selected.

Subjects which are unpopular in either the survey or the final options selection will not run. We usually consider ten students to be the absolute minimum number for which a class could run. We also reserve the right to re-allocate students by using their reserve choice when their first choice cannot be run.

Once the blocks are formed the subjects in each block remain fixed. Additional classes can however be added to blocks if the demand for a subject in that block is high and staffing availability allows for this.

### **Key Stage 5 (years 12 and 13)**

The sixth form curriculum is planned and agreed by the curriculum managers and the Principals of the schools/academies who, together, form the Trinity Sixth Form. The chair of the Trinity Sixth Form’s Curriculum Managers’ group co-ordinates regular meetings and chairs the decision making process to ensure that the post-16 courses and the enrichment opportunities on offer provide a broad and balanced curriculum offer that ensures progression to Higher Education. Further information regarding the post-16 curriculum and the sixth form in general can be found on the Trinity Sixth Form website (Trinity6.com), in the Trinity Sixth Form prospectus and from each of the individual partner schools/academies.

### **Class sizes**

When building timetable blocks and creating sets we will aim to maintain an average Key Stage 3 group of no more than 30 (and in some cases significantly smaller). This figure reduces in key stage 4.

In practical subjects, the size of the room and availability of resources will determine the maximum class size. All relevant national recommendations for maximum safe class sizes will be adhered to.

### **Setting**

Throughout Key Stage 3 students are taught in sets in those departments where subject leaders and the Senior Leadership Team believe that it is advantageous to the learning of all students. The responsibility for placing students into the correct sets lies with the subject leaders and is done using Key Stage 2 information and our own early baseline assessment.

Setting is reviewed throughout the Key Stage to ensure each individual student is best placed to maximise his or her learning potential. Often, two or more subjects are grouped together when the timetable is designed, meaning that they manage their setting process in combination with each other.

In other curriculum areas, students are taught on a mixed ability basis.

Parents wishing to appeal against the placement of their child into a particular set should do so in writing to the subject leader in the first instance. If they are not satisfied with the response they should then write to the Principal highlighting their concerns. In this instance, the Principal is likely to delegate the issue to the Senior Leader who line manages the subject(s) concerned.

### **In Year admissions**

When accepting “in year” admissions we will make every reasonable effort to match the curriculum which the student has studied in their previous school. Any inability to do so will only occur if we do not run a specific course or subject, all of the classes for a subject have reached a limit based on safety or if we have strong pastoral concerns about interactions with specific students.

When deciding on the student’s sets we will take into account information from their previous school and from any tests conducted on entry to St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy. We cannot guarantee to match their previous set if some classes are already full, but every effort will be made to ensure that their curriculum meets their needs.

### **Complaints relating to the curriculum**

All complaints relating to the curriculum should be directed to the relevant subject leader and, if not resolved, to the Senior Leader i/c of the curriculum. If these are not dealt with to the satisfaction of the parents/carers then the academy’s complaints procedure can be brought in to force.

### **Target setting**

Every student is set a challenging, yet achievable, target for each subject based on a measure of their ability and potential, encouraging them to use, develop, explore and recognise their God given talent. Year 7 targets are confirmed using their prior attainment from key stage 2 and teacher assessments. During year 7 this target level will be monitored and changed, if necessary. Regular performance reviews are sent home each academic year, indicating whether a student is performing well enough to achieve or exceed their target level. Targets are not about competing with others, but about students achieving their own personal best.

In Key Stage 3, students sit regular assessments throughout the year along with more formal examinations. These are determined on a subject-by-subject basis and are used alongside

teacher assessment, homework and classwork to form an overall assessment of performance and progress.

In Key Stage 4, students sit regular internal assessments alongside controlled assessment units of exam specifications. In addition, a mock examination period is organised in years 9, 10 and 11 to provide formal opportunities to assess student progress. Assessment performance is analysed by DLAs and SLT, ensuring timely and effective intervention is put in place where necessary.

### **Alternative Provision**

Students who find it particularly difficult to engage with the academy curriculum and/or academy expectations of behaviour for learning may be considered suitable for our new alternative provision facility: De La Salle House. Catering for small numbers of both Key Stage 3 and 4 students, the curriculum on offer is bespoke depending on the specific needs of each learner. Provision is made for English and Mathematics as well as other academic subjects depending on the individual students. There is also a range of vocational opportunities including a Workskills ( Entry Level to Level 2 ) qualification and the opportunity to learn a range of practical skills.

### **Related policies:**

Teaching & Learning, Assessment and Reporting, Equal opportunities, SEN, Complaints procedure

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