



## CURRICULUM POLICY

**This policy applies across the College at all age ranges including Early Years, Prep and Senior Schools. The policy should be read in conjunction with the SEND, EAL and Gifted & Talented policies.**

St. Columba's College is conducted in the educational tradition of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. As such it nurtures a holistic environment which includes a commitment to academic excellence. We view academic excellence as the development of each student to the maximum of his or her potential. We commit ourselves to this goal as a means of helping students become the whole and complete persons that God created them to be.

Policy owners:	Assistant Head: Director of Studies Deputy Head of Prep
Date reviewed:	Sept 2023
Date of next review:	Sept 2025
Ratify by Governors:	No

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## **Section 1 Introduction**

The College seeks to support its students by offering a curriculum that is broad, balanced and appropriate to student need, taking into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all students, including those with an EHC plan and that does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. As an independent school, the College prizes its freedom to make its own decisions relating to the curriculum, using the National Framework, the professionalism of its staff and educational best practice to inform its decisions. St. Columba's College seeks to provide an educational environment which is safe, secure, well-structured, positive and academically challenging to each student.

It is our aim to ensure that each child discovers his/her strengths and gifts and this is done by providing a holistic curriculum offering breadth as well as depth of learning.

The College aims to deliver a curriculum through a variety of means, ranging from formal academic lessons to the wider experience offered by extended learning opportunities. It seeks to enable each student to access the curriculum to achieve his/her own best standards and we provide equal opportunities for all our pupils. In so doing, we uphold the protected characteristics which are set out in the Equality Act of 2010. The Catholic and Christian values which underpin the school's ethos are inherently found in all disciplines and contribute to the core principle of the College in the rounded formation of each individual.

## **Section 2 Fundamental British Values**

The College and therefore all members of its staff are required to promote actively the fundamental British values of:

- a. democracy;
- b. the rule of law;
- c. individual liberty;
- d. mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

This will be via formal instruction in academic lessons and the pastoral and service programmes, but also as a consequence of ethos, daily living, role model and practices to support these principles.

Staff are required to actively promote these values when planning and delivering the curriculum in the following ways:

- a. choice of curriculum content (age appropriate);
- b. researching and planning Schemes of Work;
- c. planning for activities, resources and tasks of individual lessons, including homework;
- d. delivering the content, i.e. discussions and questioning;
- e. providing opportunities for extension or extra-curricular activities.

In so doing, staff will aim to help effectively prepare students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

Staff have the responsibility to actively seek to prevent students being exposed to political indoctrination through the curriculum. Staff must not seek to exploit any individual students' vulnerability by seeking to convince them that a particular political position is necessarily correct, or by trying to impose their own views on students. Staff must also challenge opinions and behaviours that are contrary to these values. In promoting these values staff must abide by specific guidance, such as vetting of outside speakers.

Cross-reference to '*Staff Safe Code of Conduct*' for further definition and clarification.

### **Section 3 Principles**

The curriculum is designed to enable students to develop the skills and knowledge which will allow them to progress through the school, to further study and to a range of career options. It provides opportunities for learning skill development and challenges students to develop a broad range of academic and other interests. It seeks to encourage in them a love of learning, a sense of purpose, a responsibility for their own learning and a care for the environment and others.

The curriculum is designed to prepare students to contribute to society in adult life in an active, positive and informed manner; to nurture spiritual, moral and faith development.

The curriculum is designed to offer students a full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996) in a variety of disciplines to include linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education. Furthermore, we offer a personal, social, health and economic education (pastoral programme) which reflects the school's aims and ethos and encourages respect for other people paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Teachers participate in the constant evaluation of their courses as well as of the overall curriculum so that both meet the needs of the students.

Teachers encourage students to reflect on the culture around them, as members of a local community and global society.

Teachers seek to motivate students by arousing curiosity, wonder and reflection, by inductive and deductive reasoning, and by relating subject content to students' life and experience.

Personal encouragement and recognition are essential to motivate student initiative and participation. Teachers recognise consistent effort and diligence, as well as ability and achievement.

Teachers show personal enthusiasm for their subject material in concrete ways in the classroom and through the many extra-curricular opportunities.

Teachers actively support the College aim of producing a community of independent life-long learners.

Teachers make provision for the needs of the individual student (see Stretch and Challenge and SEND/EAL policies).

## **Section 4 Procedures**

### **Prep**

The curriculum is planned in three phases. A long-term plan is agreed for each key stage. This indicates what topics are to be taught in each term, and to which groups of pupils. This long-term planning is reviewed on an annual basis.

Through medium-term plans, clear guidance is given on the objectives and teaching

strategies for each topic. Each subject has schemes of work through which the areas of study are articulated. Staff also use the national schemes of work as a basis for much of the medium-term planning in the foundation subjects.

Short-term plans are those that teachers write on a weekly or daily basis. These are used to set out the learning objectives for each session, and to identify what resources and activities we are going to use in the lesson and to make reference to individual pupils' needs, including those with SEND and those who require stretch and challenge.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff adopt an inter-disciplinary topic approach to curriculum planning. The curriculum is planned carefully, so that there is coherent and full coverage of all aspects of the National Curriculum and early learning goals, and there is planned progression in all curriculum areas.

In the remainder of Lower Prep and in Prep Three and Four some subject areas are integrated through a topic approach with six topics covered through the academic year. Throughout Prep Five and Six the foundation subjects are taught separately. In these year groups, History and Geography are taught in termly blocks so a pupil may concentrate in one teaching block on a History topic, then switch to a greater emphasis on Geography in the next teaching block.

Thus, in due course, each child has the opportunity to experience the full range of National Curriculum subjects.

The Prep School offers a wide and varied programme of cultural and sporting activities which support and extend the curriculum. This may be through visitors to the school or through trips and visits to places of interest.

### **Senior school**

The curriculum, as articulated in subjects' schemes of work, is constructed to enable students to gain confidence in their mastery of speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy and to challenge and stimulate interest in academic pursuits. Subject matter is designed to be appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of the students, to include those with SEND and those considered more able.

Each student, in each subject, is encouraged to develop a sense of self-respect and self-worth, an appreciation of the talents, skills and contributions of others and a desire to enquire, to apply knowledge, to think rationally, to question sensibly and use understanding to carry out practical and physical skills and tasks.

All students are given the opportunity throughout their schooling to partake in a programme of extended learning opportunities (EECA) to broaden their experiences, be they artistic, cultural, aesthetic or sporting.

Similarly, enrichment programmes are included in departmental schemes of work to support learning at each stage. These aim to develop thinking skills and independent learning strategies. Students are adequately prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

The pastoral programme, in addition to the subject curriculum, also supports the students' personal, social and health education within the College's aims and ethos. Use of data and self-reflection are components that also support academic progress. Included, too, is appropriate careers/ pastoral guidance, which is presented in an impartial manner, that enables students to make informed choices about a broad range of career options and helps to encourage students to fulfil their potential.

Resources to support learning are made available through Microsoft Teams, the Library, and individual subject departments. Reading is monitored (particularly in Forms 1-3) and recommended departmental reading lists are provided.

The Assistant Head with responsibility for Student Formation (Extended and Extra-Curricular Activities) constructs a programme of extension learning opportunities with Heads of Department.

Homework is seen as integral to the learning process and is set and marked regularly in all subjects. Homework timetables are provided.

## **Section 5 Curriculum Policy Guidance**

### **Early Years**

The curriculum taught in the Reception classes is exempt from the requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, and the guidance produced in 2014 (Last updated, September 2023). Planning does, however, take account of the Early Learning Goals, the appropriate Ages and Stages of Development and the seven Areas of Learning in building a structured and progressive Curriculum referencing the aptitudes, developing skills and experiences of individual pupils. Pupils' progress is monitored by assessing them against our own desired outcomes, and, in addition to using the data provided by the BASE assessments, by applying benchmarks relating to their characteristics as engaged, effective and happy learners.

The Prep school fully supports the principle that young children learn both through play, and by engaging actively and independently in well-planned and structured activities. The teaching in the Early Years builds on the experiences of the pupils in their pre-school learning. Staff seek to build positive partnerships with the various nurseries and other pre-school providers in the area by making pre-school-entry visits, by seeking information about individual pupils from their previous settings and by encouraging parents and carers to share information with us about their children.

It is recognised in the Prep School that pupils need the support of both parents and teachers to make good progress in school. A warm, open relationship between home and school is at the very heart of provision in the Early Years and beyond: Staff constantly strive to build positive links with the parents of each pupil. Both in advance and ongoing throughout the school year, families are kept informed about curriculum, topics and events. Staff share informal feedback daily, both at the classroom door at drop off and pick up and through the tapestry journal which is an online platform that both school and home can add to. Parents are formally invited to Parent Consultations, Open Events and discussions about pupil progress and end-of-year assessment reporting.

### **Prep (Key Stage 1 & 2)**

The Prep School plans the schemes of work with reference to the National Curriculum. Although the National Curriculum prescriptions are not followed in detail, we aim to deliver a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum to prepare our pupils for transfer to the next key stage. The subject matter selected is appropriate to the age and aptitude of the pupils, including those with SEND needs and any pupils with EHC plans.

Pupils entering Reception classes come from a range of different nursery settings. All pupils commence their Reception year in September as there is not a second intake during the year. The aim of the Reception class curriculum is to ensure equal access to the Foundation Stage learning objectives whilst also taking account of previous learning experiences and individual rates of development.

Lower Prep study Religion, PSHE, English, Maths, Science, Geography, History, French, Music, Art, Design Technology, Physical Education and Games. All subjects are taught in mixed-ability groups with appropriate levels of differentiation and extension. ICT is not taught as an explicit subject in the Lower Prep but instead, following the introduction of devices for all students, it is interwoven throughout all areas of the curriculum. The teaching of phonics is streamed in the Lower Prep and the Read, Write Inc SSP is followed.

Pupils entering the Upper Prep are mostly from the Lower Prep and also from a range of feeder schools. The aim of the Prep Three curriculum is to consolidate and extend previous learning, filling gaps and identifying any areas of concern for immediate remediation.

All pupils in the Upper Prep study: Religion, PSHE, English, Maths, Science, Computing & IT, Geography, History, French, Music, Art, Design Technology, Physical Education and Games. Pupils will be set only for maths during Prep Three and this setting continues, with the opportunity for review, throughout the Upper Prep. Throughout Prep Three and Four mixed ability teaching is used in all subject areas except Mathematics. In Prep Five and Six pupils are set for English also. In Prep Six the introduction of a carousel of languages allows the opportunity to experience Latin and Spanish in addition to French and these lessons are delivered by our colleagues in the College. Performing Arts is also taught in Prep Five and Six and this is another lesson which is delivered by our colleagues in the College. In Prep Six, as a means of further readying the children for the next stage of their educational journey, they are taught 'Future Prep'. In this lesson they focus on developing skills and all learning (money/careers/study skills etc) is explicitly linked

to the PSB. Prep Six students also work on their PSPQ projects in this lesson and showcase their achievements in May during a PSPQ exhibition which all parents and colleagues (4-18) are invited to attend.

### **The PSB – A focus on key skills**

The following six skills are part of the Prep School Baccalaureate (PSB) framework and are explicitly taught in the Prep School curriculum:

- Independence
- Collaboration
- Thinking and learning
- Leadership
- Reviewing and improving
- Communication

Through curriculum planning emphasis is made regarding these skills, so that the pupils' progress in all these areas can be identified and monitored. It is recognised that these are the transferable skills that our Prep students will need for the next stage of their education and beyond. Our aim is to make the implicit explicit and so each lesson has a skills focus alongside a learning objective, the skills are tracked by teachers and students (who are aware of the skills they are working on and can discuss them using age-appropriate language) and reported on to parents alongside their academic achievements:

### **Senior School Forms 1, 2 and 3 (Key Stage 3)**

Students enter the College from a variety of feeder schools at standard 11+ entry and so the academic aims of the Form 1 curriculum are to consolidate previous work, develop and improve learning strategies, and expose the students to a broad range of subjects. English, Mathematics, Religious Education, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, French or Spanish, and Physical Education & Games form the core of the curriculum. Students are set by ability in English and Mathematics. All students study Art, Design Technology, Drama, History, Computing, Geography, Latin and Music. In addition, lessons of STEM and Big Questions encourage students to think holistically, across traditional subject disciplines. In Form 2, Financial Services is added and all students have an opportunity to work towards the LIFE Qualification.

The teaching of French or Spanish in Forms 1, 2 and 3, provides students with the essential skills required for the study of modern languages. Latin is taught to all students in Forms 1 and 2. In Form 3, students continue with the core curriculum and choose three options from the six subjects of Art, Computer Science, Drama, DT, Latin and Music.

From the start of Form 3, students are set by ability in Science and study Biology, Chemistry and Physics separately.

A structured programme of Careers Education begins so that students are supported and informed as they move towards options for GCSE (Key Stage 4), and thereafter options for A/AS and further education applications.

### **Forms 4 and 5 (Key Stage 4, or GCSE)**

Students take up to eleven subjects sitting a variety of qualifications including GCSEs, IGCSEs and, for those students who show great proficiency in Mathematics, the FSMQ Additional Mathematics qualification alongside their IGCSE course in Mathematics.

All students study a core of English, English Literature, Mathematics, Religious Studies, and Sciences. Two choices are available for Science: the extended route leads to three GCSEs in the separate sciences of Biology, Chemistry and Physics, whereas the standard route leads to two GCSEs, foundation and additional science. All students are encouraged to continue with their modern foreign language at GCSE but some choose a third alternative option instead.

Additional subjects are chosen from: Art & Design, Business, Computer Science, Design & Technology, Drama & Theatre Studies, French, Geography, History, Latin, Music, Physical Education and Spanish. All students follow a programme which is not examined in Physical Education and Games.

### **The Sixth Form (Key Stage 5 or A-Level years)**

A breadth of study is encouraged in the Sixth Form. The number of subjects taken is decided on an individual basis, although the norm would be to start four subjects in Lower Sixth and then to specialise in Upper Sixth to gain three full A levels. Exceptionally able students may follow a full four A level course.

Twenty-three A level courses are offered: Art, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Computer Science, Design Technology, Drama, Economics, English Literature, French, Geography, History, Latin, Mathematics (with a choice of distinct courses), Further Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Physics, Politics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology and Spanish.

A-levels courses are supplemented by supervised study time and all students follow an Enrichment Programme, incorporating Religious Education, an AS qualification in the Extended Project and a Certificate/Diploma in Financial Services. Games, where various options exist, is also a compulsory component of the curriculum. Enrichment extends to large numbers of students participating in sports teams, drama, music, enterprise and charity/community initiatives.