

ST. IVO SCHOOL

CURRICULUM

POLICY

July 2005

Curriculum Policy

The policy should be read in conjunction with the Aims of the School and the values articulated in the document 'Guiding Principles'. In particular, the policy seeks to support the school's academic aims but its implementation will also promote the fulfilment of many of the personal aims and social aims. Within 'Guiding Principles', the curriculum policy supports the framework of St Ivo School as being 'comprehensive, non-selective and demanding'. It actively promotes the principles of 'individual human worth, achievement, equal value, co-operation, openness and respecting differences'. This policy expresses a key way in which the school can fulfil its role as 'a child-centred school - concerned with the whole child - which works at being inclusive'.

Curriculum aims

The aims of the curriculum of St Ivo School are to enable students to develop

- a sense of enquiry, the ability to question, solve problems and argue rationally;
- a willingness to apply themselves and an aptitude for learning;
- knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and employment in a changing world;
- literacy, numeracy and competence in the use of information technology;
- their creativity, critical awareness, empathy and sensitivity;
- a recognition of their own and others' achievements, in school and beyond;
- self-esteem, self-worth and self-confidence;
- the skills of working as an individual and as a member of a group or team;
- appropriate moral and spiritual values and tolerance of others, to value each individual and to learn to live together in an atmosphere of mutual respect;
- an awareness of the pupil's place in the community and opportunities for service to each other and to the community.

Curriculum principles

Pupil entitlement

As a fully comprehensive, 11 - 18 school, we are committed to the principle that all students, regardless of ability, race, cultural background or gender, have a right to the highest quality of education we can provide. This means that we seek to ensure:

- * breadth and balance for all ;
- * appropriate levels of expectation and genuine challenge;
- * relevance, continuity and progression in learning;

by providing courses of study and teaching methods which are tailored to the wide range of needs, interests and aspirations of our students. It also means that many features of the curriculum are common to all students. No student is denied access to any part of the curriculum on grounds of ability.

Access

The principle above presents us with a responsibility to find ways of ensuring that all students are engaged in their learning, motivated and enabled to succeed. Teaching staff are expected to ensure that, wherever possible, students who are having difficulty or becoming demotivated are identified early and provided with appropriate support, encouragement, guidance and (if necessary) different teaching styles and work, so that they might continue to participate at the

most appropriate level for them. The responsibility of finding means of access to the curriculum for all is a result of our stated intention to include, not exclude.

Expectations of staff

Putting principles into practice

Staff are expected actively to promote and seek to secure the curriculum aims (above) and, in particular to

- have high expectations of students;
- employ a variety of appropriate teaching and learning methods;
- ensure that, wherever possible, students are found means of access to the curriculum and given opportunities to succeed;
- deliver programmes of study which build upon students' previous experiences, providing progression and continuity, and which conform to the requirements of the national curriculum;
- provide work which meets their students' needs and aspirations, which offers depth and challenge, and which motivates and inspires them;
- involve the learner in the process of learning, by discussing work, giving regular feedback through assessment and marking, negotiating targets and encouraging pupils to evaluate their own achievements;
- develop students' skills to become independent learners;
- encourage, reward and value achievement and effort, both formally and informally, through praise in the learning environment;
- work in partnership with other staff, parents/carers and the wider community to achieve shared goals;
- keep parents/carers regularly and fully informed about the progress and achievements of their sons and daughters.

Curriculum structure

The timetable

The school operates a 25 period week. There are 5 periods per day (3 in the morning, 2 in the afternoon), each of which lasts for one hour, with the exception of period 2 each day, which lasts 1 hour and 10 minutes (and which is divided into two 35 minute lessons, where appropriate.) One period each week is devoted to year assemblies and tutor administration. This means that teaching time is 24 hours 50 minutes per week, in line with government recommendations for key stage 4 and in excess of those for key stage 3.

Key Stage 3: Years 7, 8 and 9

Pupils follow a common curriculum comprising

- English and drama
- mathematics
- science
- art
- design and technology
- French or/and German
- history
- geography
- music
- physical education

- religious education
- information technology
- personal and social education

From Year 8, some students are able to take both French and German. Time allocations vary slightly from year to year.

Key Stage 4: Years 10 and 11

At key stage 4, students take courses from a choice within a common core, and one further option. They also follow a course in personal and social education, which includes drugs, sex, careers and health education and RE. The common core comprises

- English (most students take both language and literature);
- mathematics;
- science (dual award);
- design and technology (students choose from product design, graphic products, electronics and food technology);
- a language (French or German);
- information technology (short GCSE together with CLAIT modules for some students)
- physical education

They then make three further choices from a list of around twelve subjects. Their choices must include

- one of history or geography
- one of art, drama, dance, music or physical education;
- and one other 'free' choice from a wide range of national curriculum foundation subjects and non-national curriculum subjects

Most courses lead to GCSE examinations. The majority of students therefore can achieve eleven GCSEs. Alternative provision is made for the small number who are not able to manage this study load, including a literacy skills course in place of one of their options.

From September 2005, a small group of students will take part in a pilot vocational course in BTEC sport.

The Sixth Form - 'A' level, VCE, GNVQ and other studies

Students choose from a wide range of around twenty-three AS and A2 courses, five applied GCE courses and five intermediate GNVQ courses. French and German course in foreign languages at work (FLAW/GNVQ unit) are also available. Due to the size of the school, most combinations are possible. GNVQ students are encouraged to consider also taking an AS level course, and some also have weekly work experience.

In addition, all sixth form students follow a course in personal and social education, attend a weekly assembly/tutorial session and able to take part in physical education. They are expected to do community service in Year 12 or 13 if time permits.

Curriculum matters

Mixed ability teaching, setting and differentiation

On arrival in Year 7, all students are placed in mixed ability tutor groups and teaching groups.

In most subjects, this is the normal pattern throughout. Some departments, however, choose to place students into ability sets or broad bands at some point during Years 7 - 9, in order to target work more precisely. These departments include mathematics, languages and science.

In all mixed ability classes, sets and broad banded groups, there is a wide range of ability. In addition, individual pupils have preferred learning styles: some work well in groups while others prefer to work individually; some perform best in long-term projects while others like defined tasks; some respond well to oral work, while others prefer written work; some find written communication difficult but work effectively on a computer.

To take account of these differences and the range of ability in any class, all staff have a responsibility, when planning work, to meet the needs of all pupils. This will involve, at different times, adapting tasks, providing different resources, developing extension work, providing a variety of learning styles and environments, setting individual goals, giving different levels of support, and offering a variety of ways to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. In educational jargon, this approach is known as differentiation.

Class sizes

In Years 7 - 9, the usual teaching group is the tutor group (about thirty students). In some subjects, for example where there are health and safety issues to consider (as in design and technology), smaller groups of about twenty to twenty-two are created. Similarly in PE or games, where there is a need for some single sex groups, smaller groups are formed. Where setting exists, the norm is to create smaller groups for the least able students, so that more individual attention can be provided.

In Years 10 and 11, groups in English, mathematics and science average about twenty-four to twenty-five. Most other subjects are options, and group sizes vary, usually from around fifteen to twenty-eight. In the sixth form, the minimum size of a viable group is around seven to eight. Very few groups exceed twenty two.

The learning environment

The school is aware that a lively, purposeful and structured learning environment is essential in promoting high standards and good working practices. Displays of students' work, stimulus materials and appropriate resources are very important in setting standards and raising expectations. All departments are expected to emphasise good display in their areas and contribute to displays in public areas of the school. The structure and organisation of the classroom is also an important factor in developing effective working methods and a positive ethos. Whilst this is left to individual teachers and departments, it is expected that classrooms are orderly environments where pupils can work effectively and in comfort, that adequate resources are provided and are accessible, and that students treat classrooms, workshops, study rooms and the resource centre with respect.

Schemes of work and lesson planning

Each department is required to have schemes of work for all of its courses/programmes related, where appropriate, to the national curriculum and or examination board requirements. These schemes of work are followed by all departmental staff and their delivery monitored by heads of department. Schemes of work set out how the content of the course is structured, so that students' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed progressively, and how the teaching is organised. These schemes of work are supported by assessment strategies and methods for ensuring standardisation of expectation and assessment. Departments also have marking policies which all staff follow. Teachers plan individual lessons, or sequences of lessons, in different ways.

The school does not prescribe a single method for short-term or long-term planning. It simply expects that such planning takes place, in sufficient detail to ensure that pupils achieve high standards and can achieve their potential. Each department has an agreed method for the recording of lessons and homework.

Homework

St Ivo School recognises the importance and value of homework as an extension of classwork, and a vehicle to practice skills, acquire new ones and develop good study habits. The school has a separate, detailed homework policy.

In outline, students in Years 7, 8 and 9 should expect homework to be set once or twice a week in most subjects. In Year 7, the demand is approximately half an hour per subject per week. This rises to about one hour per subject per week by Year 9. A homework timetable is published. Homework can, however, take a variety of forms, including reading, research, planning and evaluating, as well as the more-familiar written work.

Students in Years 10 and 11 prepare for GCSE examinations and undertake a wider variety of homework tasks. Quite often, teachers set homework which extends over more than one week. It is impossible, therefore, to timetable homeworks rigidly. It is expected that up to two hours homework per week will be needed in each subject.

Special educational needs

The role of the special needs department is to support the right which all students have to access the curriculum, regardless of their ability. Students, whether they have special educational needs or not, have an equal opportunity to participate in the full curriculum of the school (including the national curriculum) and all activities. Students with special educational needs are encouraged to become independent and take responsibility within the school.

The school adopts the staged procedure recommended by Cambridgeshire LEA for the identification of provision for students with special educational needs. The advice of specialists is taken at all stages.

Access to the full curriculum of the school, including the national curriculum, is achieved by careful differentiation of classwork by the subject teacher. Through careful planning, the teacher will define what the pupil is expected to learn. Once the learning objective is defined, a subject teacher can seek advice from the special needs co-ordinator on strategies which might be used to help a pupil achieve the learning objects. It is the responsibility of the subject teacher to assess whether the objective has been achieved. Schemes of work take account of the need for teachers to plan individual programmes of appropriate content and pace, using a variety of teaching methods and materials. Particular consideration is given to the use of ICT by students whose difficulty lies in writing.

All those who teach a student with special educational needs are informed of the need by the special needs co-ordinator. Each subject department has a named teacher who acts as contact person in relation to special needs. The special needs co-ordinator will ensure that all who are likely to come into contact with the student are updated regularly with appropriately information. Where students have a very specific problem, a meeting will be convened of all subject teachers concerned, to disseminate available information.

The work of the special educational needs co-ordinator is supported by Learning Support Assistants (LSAs). As far as possible, each student with a statement of special educational need receives their allocated hours in the form of classroom support. A small number of students benefit from a limited amount of withdrawal from mainstream lessons. The department operates a reading improvement programme for Year 7 pupils whose reading ages are substantially below their chronological age, to give them access to the curriculum.

Equality of opportunity

All departments have equal opportunities statements and named representatives who are responsible for reviewing and, if necessary, updating the policy. They also should actively promote quality of opportunity in the curricular work of the department. The school's equality working group meet at least termly to discuss, amongst other issues, curriculum content and access. Staff from the county multi-cultural education service are available to support bilingual pupils, and students from minority ethnic groups, in gaining access to the curriculum. They also advise staff in devising appropriate teaching programmes.

Gifted students

A number of students display special talents, skills, expertise and understanding in particular areas. These include both high levels of ability in subject disciplines and in activities beyond the curriculum - sporting prowess and musical excellence, for example. It is the responsibility of all staff to identify such students, to encourage their interests and to make appropriate provision for them. Such provision includes planning classroom-based work which genuinely stretches such pupils, and additional challenges and experiences offered through clubs, discussion groups, interest and support groups, attendance at lectures and conferences, and opportunities to participate in external groups, societies, teams and organisations. Many of our students are already involved in such activities and their excellence is acknowledged publicly in assemblies and in the Head's newsletter.

Examinations

It is expected that all students who embark on a course leading to a public examination are entered for that examination, unless they fail to fulfil the examination board's requirements in relation to coursework, attendance or other criteria. Departments are expected to identify, at an early stage, pupils who are in danger of failing to meet the requirements, so that they can be supported, guided and encouraged. To this end, a 'mentoring' system exists for Year 11 students. Those who, despite the best efforts of staff, are not entered for the examination are nonetheless expected to complete the course of study, alongside other pupils.

The school pays for all examination entries for courses for which it has prepared students. In the sixth form, students who change course after registration or entry fees have been paid by the school are liable to repay those fees to the school. Entries made under the auspices of community education are charged to the student.

Vocational education

In the sixth form, a variety of vocational courses are established. These are offered at both intermediate and advanced levels. Increasingly students are able to mix vocational and academic courses, a development which we encourage.

At KS4, students' vocational entitlement is met by a combination of curricular experiences, rather than through specific courses. These experiences include the development of ICT capability, the careers education and guidance programme, action planning (Years 9 - 11), work experience, awareness-raising (for example through assemblies and tutorial work) and personal management and decision-making skills delivered through the PSE programme. From September 2005, a pilot vocational course in BTEC sport will run.

All Year 10 students take part in a two-week period of work experience. This is designed to give them an insight into the world of work and to develop a range of skills needed in a work environment. As far as possible Year 12 students following a GNVQ course experience a work placement as an integral part of their course. The placement is closely related to the vocational area which they are studying. 'A' level and vocational GCE students can choose to take part in the post-16 work placement scheme. This enables students to develop a piece of research, as an element of their academic course, within a work placement.

Information and communication technology

We believe that the development of capability in the use of ICT is an essential requirement of pupils' education and that they have an entitlement to IT resources and teaching of the highest possible quality. The development of ICT at St Ivo School is guided by the following principles:

- all students have an entitlement to the use of ICT, as detailed in the national curriculum, throughout key stages 3 and 4. They are expected to develop both understanding and practical expertise. Students develop their skills through specific teaching in ICT lessons, as well as a result of the use of ICT in subject areas;
- ICT resources are planned and deployed within the context of St Ivo as a community school. We seek to ensure that resources of the highest quality, and of an appropriate type are provided to meet the needs of both the school and community users;
- the main forum for policy review and implementation is the ICT users group. Staff representing all departments work together to promote a wider understanding and application of ICT;
- staff are strongly encouraged to make full use of opportunities for professional development in ICT. Practical workshops are held on a regular basis as part of the school-based INSET programme, and there are also many opportunities to attend external courses.

Religious education

As an LEA school, we seek to meet the requirements of the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus. The aim of religious education at St Ivo School is to enable students to understand the nature of religion, its beliefs and practices. In Years 7, 8 and 9 one hour per week is devoted to religious education. In Year 10, the scheme of work is taught as a module of the PHSE programme. GCSE ethics is offered in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form, ethics is available at AS and A2.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Spiritual development is accomplished in a variety of ways. The assembly programme includes regular contributions from local clergy and religious groups. Religious Education lessons actively encourage students to examine the nature of religion, its beliefs and practices.

Students are encouraged to reflect upon their own attitudes and values, in both religious education and other lessons. In some subjects, notably perhaps art, drama, music and English, students explore their feelings and responses to wider issues and beliefs. Many lessons and extra-curricular experiences allow pupils to develop a sense of awe and wonder and to reflect upon inner feelings and ask questions about meaning and purpose.

Moral development is promoted through the tutorial programme (including praise and rewards); in many subject areas (eg history, religious education and drama); through consistent application of the code of conduct and by positive reinforcement of good behaviour. The ethos and practices of the school encourage students to learn to distinguish between right and wrong. We seek to promote good relationships throughout the school community and genuine tolerance and understanding of all cultures. In addition, the assembly programme addresses many moral, ethical, environmental and social issues.

Social development is promoted through many opportunities for pupils to work together, in a variety of situations, both within and beyond lessons. Students have extensive opportunities to take responsibility through activities such as Year councils, working groups (eg road safety, school fund) representing the school at meetings, work in support of charities, and assisting at parents'/carers' evenings, performances and events. Students offer valuable support to their peers through participation in The Listening Service. The community dimension of the school also presents opportunities for positive interaction between students, adult users of the school and the community in general.

Cultural development is encouraged both within lessons and through a very wide variety of extra-curricular activities such as music, drama and dance workshops and performances, art exhibitions, events such as the annual reading festival and regular visits from theatre companies and artists-in-residence. Students also take part in a wide range of visits and trips to museums, galleries, theatres and foreign visits and exchanges. The range of cultures represented in the school is valued and celebrated, with regular educational displays of cultural artefacts and explanations of traditions.

Personal and Social Education (including health, sex and drugs education)

Personal and social education is an integral part of the philosophy and ethos of the school. Across the whole curriculum, we aim to develop students' knowledge, values, personal and social skills to help them benefit from their school experience and prepare them to take their place as responsible citizens in society. Many aspects of the school and its work contribute to personal and social education, the ways in which members of the school community behave towards one another, the links between the school and the wider community, our many extra-curricular activities such as sport, drama, music and a wide range of trips and activities out of school.

The PSE curriculum throughout Years 7 - 13 contributes to a number of cross-curricular areas, including personal organisation and study skills, health education (including drugs education, sex education and personal safety), education for citizenship, environmental education, economic and industrial awareness and careers education. The PSE curriculum is taught by form tutors to their tutor groups, supported by specialist staff and outside speakers.

Work related curriculum

An effective work related programme lies at the centre of the necessary experience of all students. The programme seeks to raise aspirations and help all students achieve their potential. We are aware that the changing nature of work require special skills on the part of our students. As adults, they will need to be able to adapt to changing patterns of employment, operate in a climate of competition and be willing to develop new knowledge, skills and competences throughout their working lives.

Through a structured and progressive programme of learning, we expect students to develop an understanding of the demands and challenges of the workplace, the rewards and satisfaction work can bring the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees, and knowledge of the requirements of employers and educational institutions and sources of information and guidance. We also expect them to develop relevant skills, including research, problem-solving and decision-making skills, presentational and communication skills, planning and self-management skills and the confidence needed to operate in the employment market place.

The programme operates in all years. Its principal features include

- awareness-raising;
- personal strengths analysis;
- job application and interview skills;
- research skills;
- action planning;
- careers interviews;
- information and guidance about post-16 and post-school education and career routes;
- work experience and work placements
- various events eg 'World of Work' day in Year 9.

The careers library, situated in The Keep, houses comprehensive information about career opportunities and courses of further and higher education. There is also a computer-based careers information system.

The work related programme is managed by the school's careers co-ordinator and taught by the co-ordinator and form tutors. We have close links with Connexions, and personal and intensive advisers work with students in key stage 4 and the sixth form. We have a strong

partnership between staff, students, parents/carers, governors, employers, education/training providers and external agencies. There is a separate careers policy.

Curriculum links with partner schools

Many departments have well-established curriculum links with our partner primary schools, particularly in the summer term (eg dance workshops and technology activities.) Incoming Year 7 pupils spend a day in St Ivo School in the preceding July, following a typical timetable. The transfer of information about students' prior attainment and strengths and weaknesses in different subjects is co-ordinated by the head of year 7 and communicated to relevant departments.

Monitoring, review and evaluation

Curriculum Management Group

The curriculum management group meets approximately twice per term to consider matters concerning the curriculum and assessment regarding

- planning;
- monitoring and reviewing;
- responding to school and external developments;
- sharing experience and practice.

The group is chaired by the deputy head (curriculum) and comprises

- assistant head (assessment);
- assistant head (inclusion);
- assistant head (school self-evaluation);
- assistant head (pupil vice/learning environment);
- careers co-ordinator;
- special needs co-ordinator;
- resource centre manager
- heads of department (English, mathematics, science, art, business studies, drama, geography, history, ICT, MFL, physical education and technology).

These representatives liaise with and brief other heads of department with whom they are linked.

Governors' curriculum and assessment committee

The governors' curriculum and assessment committee meets approximately twice per term. Its terms of reference are to

- secure the place of the national curriculum and RE within the school curriculum;
- ensure that the statutory requirements of assessment, recording and reporting are met;
- ensure that statutory and additional St Ivo requirements of the SEN policy are fulfilled;
- monitor and review the progress of school priorities in the development plan and OFSTED action plan by receiving reports from curriculum areas as and when appropriate;
- agree and set the annual statutory and non-statutory pupil performance targets and monitor and review progress;
- receive and respond to suggested policy changes regarding the curriculum;
- receive reports from the school curriculum management group;
- monitor and review pupil attendance.

The committee considers developments and initiatives in the curriculum and assessment and monitors the effectiveness of curriculum provision, in order to ensure that the school meets its statutory requirements. The committee receives regular updates on the work of departments. The committee reports to, and makes recommendations to the full governing body termly and reports to parents/carers annually.

Governor links

A number of governors are 'linked' to departments and other areas of the school's work. The purpose of these links is to become better informed about the successes and constraints experienced by departments; to support and encourage, and where appropriate, to advise. The insight gained by governors in this process contributes to full and informed curriculum discussions at meetings of the governing body.

Heads of Department/Heads of Year

Heads of department (and heads of year in relation to the PSE programme) are responsible for effective curriculum provision, including appropriate schemes of work, the necessary resources to support them, and the maintenance of appropriate standards. They are responsible for providing appropriate in-service training for staff to improve the quality of provision in the classroom. They are expected to monitor the quality of teaching in the department, and to take steps to improve weaknesses. They are also expected to monitor students' standards of achievement and develop strategies to improve them. Heads of department sample teachers' marking and reports to parents/carers. They are expected to ensure common standards and expectations and to lead the department's work in standardising assessments. Heads of department have a crucial role in quality assurance in relation to the curriculum and its delivery.

The mentoring system

Each subject department (along with other aspects of the school's work) has a 'mentor', drawn from the senior management team. The mentor acts as a 'critical friend'. This role involves supporting, helping, informing and advising on the one hand, and a quality assurance role on the other. Mentors meet heads of department regularly (usually two or three times per term.) Focuses for their discussions during the year will typically include

- reviewing examination results;
- progress on achieving development plan targets;
- curriculum planning and development;
- examinations and specifications;
- the development of schemes of work;
- homework;
- student progress and expectations.

Curriculum complaints procedure

The 1988 Education Reform Act requires the governing body to have in place procedures for the consideration of complaints that the school is failing to meet its statutory obligations in relation to the national curriculum and various other matters. Full details of the curriculum complaints procedure are obtainable from the deputy head (curriculum) at the school.

In summary, parents/carers may make representations if they feel that either the LEA or the governing body are failing to

- provide the national curriculum in the school or for a particular child;
- follow the law on charging for school activities;
- offer only approved qualifications or syllabuses;
- provide religious education and daily collective worship;

- provide the information that they have to provide;
- carry out any other statutory duty relating to the curriculum
- or, are acting unreasonably in any of the above cases

This policy was adopted by the governing body in Summer 2003 and updates approved in Summer 2005.

Review date: by Summer 2007