

Our curriculum needs to be broad, balanced, rich, relevant and forward thinking in order to meet the needs of all our children, contribute to their Success Stories, whatever their ability, and prepare them for their future lives in modern Britain and the rapidly developing world around us. Through our SUCCESS aims, ELF initiative, and the work of the Junction, we also provide our children with the necessary learning tools and the social and emotional resilience which they will require in an increasingly complex and competitive world.

### How did you design it?

Following the curriculum leader's attendance at a conference entitled: Designing a Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the school began a complete overhaul of its curriculum with the long term commitment of creating relevant, exciting and meaningful learning experiences, which children would remember and which reflect the ethos and unique nature of our school, cross-referenced with the existing National Curriculum. Year group teams were asked to develop a long term plan for their part of the school, covering all subjects. This was then reviewed as a whole school to ensure continuity, progression, breadth and balance. We adopted a topic-based approach and ensured that we provided a wealth of opportunities for active, hands-on learning whilst retaining the necessary rigour. We committed ourselves to involving the children in the planning process to ensure that learning is reflective of their own interests and enthusiasms and to be flexible within the teaching of a topic to allow for adjustments and adaptations based on the direction the children's interests take. Staff, parents, pupils and governors were consulted as part of the curriculum development process, resulting in the production of '*101 things to do before you are 12*'. In response to our 2013 inspection report and the publication of the revised National Curriculum in 2014, we took the opportunity to audit and refresh our curriculum to ensure it continued to satisfy the requirements of the new curriculum, our own aims and the needs of our pupils. After the school academised in 2015, the opportunity was taken to further adapt and amend the curriculum where we felt that this would serve the best interests of the pupils. This process does not have an end point; we are constantly reviewing provision, trying out new ideas and taking risks. A full review of the curriculum across the school will take place in the summer of 2019.

### How does your curriculum promote your school's culture and aims, including SMSC and British values?

Our rigorous curriculum, combined with high quality teaching, ensures that children are enabled to become well-rounded, empathetic members of the school and local communities with an enthusiasm for learning. Children develop a strong sense of moral purpose in addition to a respect for and understanding of others and of the natural world. We achieve this by putting values at the heart of what we do. The children are regularly challenged to explore the role of British values in their learning and to acknowledge, appreciate and understand the place and purpose of social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of learning.

Example: As part of their Amazing World topic, pupils in Y5/6 have explored global challenges and considered their responsibilities as citizens of a wealthy nation. Following research, they voted on a charity to support and took part in a sponsored challenge to raise money.

### How have you designed your curriculum to ensure deep learning, engagement, breadth and balance?

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Example: As part of their Ancient Egypt topic, pupils in Y3/5 took part in workshops at the local Mercer Gallery and the Pump Room museum. These visits were used to stimulate learning and engagement in the wider topic and make the children more aware of what is available in their local environment.

## **What are your Curriculum Drivers?**

At Western, we have designed a fluid and evolving curriculum which can respond to change, whether this is in terms of the children's interests, global or local developments or technological innovation. However, the key principles (or drivers) of our curriculum remain consistent and are briefly outlined below.

### **Excitement and engagement.**

We are committed to providing learning which is rooted in real experiences which will enthuse, motivate and inspire our pupils. These may take the form of educational visits, experts being invited into school and the use of artefacts and environments to promote excitement and engagement in learning.

### **Effective Learners Forever (ELF)**

Ensuring that children acquire and develop key learning skills is central to our aims. We enable children to become aware of the importance of learning these skills, to know their own strengths and weaknesses and to have opportunities to develop and improve their use of a range of such skills, including: problem solving, communication, evaluation, thinking, questioning and creativity. One of the products of the successful development of these skills is increased confidence. In a competitive world, it is increasingly important for children and adults to have the confidence to express themselves clearly, to stand up for what they believe in, to 'sell' themselves and to be able to make sensible and informed decisions. We provide a range of opportunities, across the school, for children to develop this confidence and high self-esteem. This can be through presenting to their class, performing on stage, talking to stakeholders, showing visitors around school, sharing their learning with parents or taking part in sporting and academic competitions.

### **Community**

It is important for our children to have a sense of community and the vital role they play within it. At a local level, this involves the children sharing their learning with parents, friends and community groups; engaging with local businesses, social care providers and church groups and taking part in local events such as Remembrance Day, Countryside Day, competitive sport and musical events at the Harrogate International Centre and other venues. Pupils are taught to consider and reflect upon their responsibilities as global citizens through involvement in charities such as Water Aid and Dr Barnardo's; by investigating the natural world, sustainability and endangered species and by becoming involved in environmental issues such as plastic pollution. All our children are taught British values and how they are pivotal to healthy communities.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

In an increasingly complex and demanding world, with its associated problems of poor physical and mental health, we are determined to make our children aware of these issues and to provide them with the skills, experiences, understanding and strength of character which will enable them to make sensible choices, leading to healthy and fulfilling lives. This is achieved in several ways. Through assembly themes, PSHE and science, children become aware of issues such as exercise, diet and drugs and how they affect people's lives. We have a strong sporting tradition at Western which encourages all children to develop the habit of regular physical exercise which they will hopefully carry with them into adulthood. From Nursery to Year 6, our children are immersed in the natural world, encouraged to take measured risks, develop confidence and try new and adventurous activities such as rock-climbing and canoeing. Through the work of the highly qualified team in the Junction and the mental health training received by the teaching staff, the school is well equipped to manage pupils' mental health issues.

### **Technology**

In an increasingly digital world, it is vital that pupils are able to equip themselves with the knowledge, skills and confidence associated with the effective use of modern technology. At Western this is achieved through our computing curriculum and through the use of one to one iPads in the classrooms. Pupils are taught how to use iPads, computers and other technology efficiently and safely, to enhance and tailor their learning experiences. The use of iPads as the main teaching medium has the associated benefits of reducing teacher workload, particularly in the sphere of marking, and reducing a school's carbon footprint as much less paper is consumed.

## **What is the experience of the children in the school?**

In the most recent pupil survey (November 2017), 98% of pupils agreed that learning at Western is fun and exciting; 99% said that they enjoy their learning and 100% said that they regularly learn new facts and skills. Parental views about our

curriculum are overwhelmingly positive. Typical comments from a recent (April 2017) online questionnaire and from a range of curriculum events in school, include:

*He certainly is taught well and learns new things every day.*

*Creative learning and interesting visits.*

*My children are happy and settled at Western and enjoy a range of interesting learning opportunities.*

*Wide ranging curriculum, happy friendly school.*

*Caring environment and high academic standards.*

*Encourages pupils to be kind, respectful and teaches them important values that I agree with.*

*Good variety of learning topics and school trips.*

*From amazing singing, to fantastic presentations, to mind blowing poetry, to wonderful dancing, to brilliant debating – well done to all.*

### **Are expectations for English and maths even across other subjects?**

It is made very clear to pupils that each of them is expected to demonstrate writing in all subject areas which is reflective of his/her highest possible standard. Similarly, in subjects such as science, history, geography, computing and ICT, pupils will be expected to use mathematical concepts in line with their mathematical ability.

Example: Pupils in KS1 are reminded of their current English focus (e.g. accurate use of the comma in a list) before beginning a piece of writing in a subject such as science or history. In a recent science lesson related to buoyancy, pupils were asked to measure their boats and use a measuring jug to add a specific quantity of water to a tray.

### **How do you ensure that more able pupils are appropriately challenged?**

There are a range of strategies used to ensure there is engagement and challenge for more able pupils across the curriculum: questioning is used in lessons to explore and challenge understanding and perceptions; additional challenges are frequently set as part of a lesson task\*; we communicate expectations to all pupils based on their abilities; staff and resources from secondary schools are often utilised to provide additional challenge; the school regularly participates in events aimed at higher performing pupils; qualified coaches, artists and musicians are employed/used to develop pupils' talents; the school participates in a wide range of sports at a competitive level.

Example: Pupils in Early Years are set regular cross-curricular challenges (Chilli Challenge) which are accessible to all pupils but are designed to specifically stretch the more able.

\* additional challenges are open to all pupils but are most suited to the more able.

### **How does your curriculum promote physical and mental well-being and personal development?**

As part of our PE curriculum, teachers promote participation in sport and physical exercise as a lifestyle choice and explain the associated health and social benefits of regular physical activity. The school runs a range of sports clubs and regularly takes part in a wide variety of competitive events which are open to the vast majority of pupils. Many of our educational visits are outdoor in nature, including the two residential experiences in KS2 which provide an opportunity for pupils to take part in new sporting pursuits. Pupils in Y6 also take part in the John Muir award which encourages people to enjoy outdoor spaces.

As part of our science curriculum, pupils are taught the health benefits of a balanced diet and regular exercise. Older pupils also learn about the impact of cigarettes, alcohol and tobacco. During PSHE lessons, pupils have the opportunity to discuss mental health issues and ways in which we can manage anxiety.

As a school, we have worked hard to promote mental health and wellbeing. The Junction serves the purpose of supporting pupils, parents and staff who may be experiencing anxiety or other difficulties related to mental health. The Junction is a specialist resource offering the following:

### Quiet Room – Safe nurturing space 1:1

play, art, creative and talk therapy (regular support with life changes - bereavement, parental split, young carer – offers emergency sessions )

### Therapeutic Counsellor

Therapeutic counselling 1:1 Therapy through sand tray and other creative media to process traumatic life events

### Emotion and Communication Coach

Planting Positivity, Anxiety Intervention, Language and communication interventions – 5 point scale and lego therapy (SALT difficulties, communication difficulties, emotional and social difficulties)

### Wellbeing Co-ordinator

Initial responder, support in first assessment, emotional literacy (ELSA) relationship building, self-awareness, self-esteem.

### Family Support Worker

Link to women's refuge, Initial responder, support in first assessment, emotional literacy (ELSA) relationship building, self-awareness, self-esteem. Immediate link to parents.

In addition to this, older pupils in the school take part in meditation and positivity lessons, which help them to deal with anxieties relating to SATs and moving to high school. Meditation and mindfulness classes are also available to staff and pupils after school. Pupils are taught about the health benefits of regular contact with outdoor spaces and older pupils take part in the John Muir Award.

All teaching and classroom support staff at the school have had training on Attachment Disorder and have achieved Awareness of Mental Health Issues Level 1 through training by Compass Buzz.

Personal development is an important aspect of our curriculum. Our aim is to develop confident, knowledgeable, self-assured and confident young people through our school aim of Success Stories. We provide many opportunities for pupils to perform in front of audiences, which develops their confidence and sense of importance. Pupils are also given a range of responsibilities such as recycling monitors, House captains and vice captains, Y6 volunteers and showing visitors around school. Pupils from across the school are members of Success teams who meet regularly to plan ways in which they can monitor and develop aspects of school life and pass this information on to the wider pupil body. Older pupils regularly meet with the Head and Deputy and with our School Improvement Adviser to feed back the work they have been doing and to take part in wider discussions. A range of clubs offer pupils the chance to develop excellence in areas such as music, sport and singing. Two residential visits also challenge pupils to develop their independence, organisational skills and self-reliance.

### How innovative is your curriculum?

Western has long been regarded as an innovative school. Curriculum innovation first started in 2007 when schools were given greater freedom to take control of their curriculum. We began by consulting with parents, pupils, staff and governors to find out what they felt were important, interesting and inspiring aspects of learning. From this, we developed themed topics which linked several subject areas in a coherent and meaningful series of lessons and experiences. We were careful to ensure that topics were not simply knowledge-based but provided opportunities for understanding, for developing and utilising new skills, to see the bigger picture and be reflective of social and community issues both locally and in the wider world. Alongside this, the school developed an exciting list of '101 Things to do Before you are 12'. This document is used to support medium term planning and has recently been revised and relaunched with pupils, staff and parents.

Recognising the importance of developing the skills which promote lifelong learning, the school developed its Effective Learners Forever initiative (ELF) in 2009. This aims to help the children to be aware of, practise and develop a range of skills which are the building blocks for effective learning.

Other innovations include the development of the Reading Hour in KS2, the use of Pets for Therapy to develop English skills in KS1 and the forging of close links with Harrogate Grammar School to provide facilities and expertise in a range of curriculum areas.

### How does your curriculum prepare pupils for life in modern Britain and the wider world?

- Enterprise opportunities – for example: KS1 café, Y5/6 Victorian Christmas Market, Young Enterprise club
- Presentation opportunities (shows, success groups, pupils meeting with/showing around stakeholders)
- Links with the local community (business, religion, other schools, sports, music)
- The promotion of values – not just British Values but things such as honesty, empathy and an appreciation of the natural world
- Exploration of world events/issues (e.g. climate change, poverty, famine, over-population). This may then relate to charities and fundraising
- Awareness of religious/cultural/relationship diversity (Stonewall materials as an example)
- Languages – French, Mandarin

- Our focus on promoting healthy lifestyles, including mental health
- ELF – developing key learning skills for life including problem solving which is critical to many employers

### **What difference is it making to pupils' learning?**

Above all, we want our curriculum to make a difference to children's learning. We achieve this by ensuring that the nature of our curriculum positively shapes the children's attitudes to learning. We make learning an exciting prospect and this means that children are more ready/likely to want to engage with learning, both now and in the future. Through our focus on key learning skills (ELF), we make children aware of, and help to develop such skills, which mean they have better tools for learning and, therefore, a greater capacity to learn.