

CURRICULUM POLICY

The School's Academic Mission

Introduction

The Hall Grove curriculum encompasses all the planned activities which are organised in order to promote learning, personal growth and development. It includes not only the explicit requirements of the taught, but also includes the implicit benefits of the 'hidden curriculum' – what the pupils learn from the way they are treated and the variety of opportunities which lie outside the timetable. We want our pupils to grow into positive, responsible people, who can work and cooperate with others, while at the same time developing their knowledge and skills.

Aims

The aims of our school curriculum are:

- To provide a thorough and broad education which engages, excites and challenges our pupils
- To include the knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate for the age and aptitude of the pupils, including those with a statement
- To provide a planned and monitored curriculum which ensures that learning is continuous and that the children make good progress and acquire skills in speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy
- To prepare the pupils for their next schools and for adult life
- To ensure that the children have an education which is rich in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative experiences
- To promote a positive attitude towards learning, so that pupils enjoy coming to school and acquire a solid base for lifelong learning
- To enable pupils to be positive citizens
- To provide an education which fulfils the requirements of pupils with a statement
- To provide personal, social, and health education (PSHE) which reflects the school's aims and ethos
- To fulfil the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). To incorporate the National Curriculum where appropriate, to prepare the children for the requirements of individual schools' entry or Scholarship requirements
- To help pupils to have an awareness of their own spiritual development, and to distinguish right from wrong
- To help pupils to understand the importance of truth and fairness, so that they grow up committed to equal opportunities for all
- To enable pupils to have respect for themselves and high self-esteem, and to live and work cooperatively with others
- To provide adequate preparation for pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life

The White Paper *Better Schools* listed the purposes of learning as being:

i) to help pupils develop lively, enquiring minds, the ability to question and argue rationally and to apply themselves to tasks, and physical skills;

ii) to help pupils acquire understanding, knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and employment in a fast-changing world;

iii) to help pupils use language and number effectively;

iv) to help pupils develop personal moral values, respect for religious values, and tolerance of other races, religions and ways of life;

v) to help pupils understand the world in which they live, and the interdependence of individuals, groups and nations;

vi) to help pupils appreciate human achievements and aspirations.

Considering such goals, together with our particular goals as an independent preparatory school, the Hall Grove curriculum must achieve the following:

1. It must prepare pupils thoroughly for success in internal exams, SATs, Common Entrance and scholarship exams.
2. It must excite and extend the intellect and interest of every pupil, whatever their strengths and weaknesses, and build their confidence and self esteem in all areas.
3. It must provide sufficient breadth and depth of information, skills and experiences to provide a firm basis for future educational and career opportunities and choices.
4. It must provide at least the information and skills laid down in the National Curriculum since this is the starting-point for most senior school syllabuses and public exams, including the GCSE.
5. It must provide the experiences and opportunities necessary as a foundation for an enriched, healthy and fulfilled life.
6. It must provide the personal, social and moral knowledge and skills necessary for happiness and for responsible and caring citizenship.

Further principles that apply to the construction of a curriculum are breadth, balance, relevance, differentiation and equal opportunities. The following constitute some of the key elements of knowledge and skills which pupils should possess on leaving Hall Grove:

- i) an ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing
 - ii) a thorough grounding in the humanities
 - iii) numeracy and a sound grasp of the application of mathematics
 - iv) knowledge of the natural sciences and the world environment
 - v) a sound grasp of at least one foreign language and culture
 - vi) competence in the use of computers and other modern technology to enhance learning and as an aid to discerning what information is valuable and worthwhile.
 - vii) an appreciation of the cultural heritage of Britain, Europe and the world
 - viii) fitness and a concern for personal health
- ix) an ability to apply moral principles to personal and social issues, and an appreciation of the responsibilities of citizenship and membership of a community
- x) an ability to identify problems and to work creatively towards solutions - the ability to think and apply knowledge.

Planning

The Reception classes adhere to the DfES Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage which includes six areas of learning:

§ Personal, Social & Emotional Development

- § Communication, Language & Literacy
- § Mathematical Development
- § Knowledge & Understanding of the World
- § Physical Development
- § Creative Development

Good Teaching Practice

The school believes that learning should be a rewarding and enjoyable experience for everyone. Through our teaching we intend to equip children with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to be able to make informed choices about aspects of their lives. We believe in the concept of lifelong learning and that stimulating and challenging teaching and learning experiences will create the foundation for children to lead happy and rewarding lives. The single most important resource any child can have is their teacher, and teaching is a craft that needs to be constantly honed and improved. This policy outlines the good practice expected of all teachers, while at the same time realising the need for different individual strategies and teaching styles.

The school encourages and expects high standards of teaching and educational practice. INSET days are provided regularly for staff to reflect on and build their skills, ideas and philosophies of teaching. The staff development programme, appraisal system, opportunities for external training and the induction scheme are all designed to maximise standards and provide teachers with a correspondingly high level of work satisfaction. The staff at Hall Grove regards good teaching practice as including the following:

The encouragement of pupil-teacher contact. All staff are expected to provide regular opportunities for individual pupil-teacher contact inside and, where possible, outside of class. Opportunities in class could include marking work individually, circulating and talking to pupils individually while they are working on tasks or practicals; individual language oral work; and pupils feeling able to approach the teacher individually during or after a lesson.

The encouragement of co-operation among pupils. The needs vary according to subject but collaborative learning should play some part in all subjects. Group work can still be competitive to achieve high standards – the competition can be between groups rather than between individuals.

Group work, like all work, needs specific aims, goals and guidance. For it to be effective good class discipline is a pre-requisite. Weaker children must not be allowed to lose out or become over-dependent on others' help. However, involvement in a successful team effort can raise the sense of achievement and the confidence of weaker pupils. Teachers should group the children carefully, according to pupils' knowledge, skills, personalities and attitudes to each other.

Collaborative teaching (e.g. team-teaching) can go hand-in-hand with collaborative learning and can be beneficial to both pupils and teachers.

The use of diverse teaching techniques and the encouragement of active learning. Teaching must always be such that the pupils see themselves as active participants in the learning process, rather than as an audience. A feeling of ownership of the learning and the material used is an essential part of this perception. Teachers must be aware of the various learning styles of children. The more media and techniques through which a topic is taught the more likely it is that all the children will learn it.

Efficient preparation and properly structured lessons.

1. Using CE and scholarship documents and the National Curriculum programmes of study each department will have a scheme of work established. This is a practical working document, providing information on what each class group will cover in a year. It will provide a very complete and clear picture of what happens in lessons and preps in the subject – showing both *what* is being taught, learned and tested, and *how* it is being taught, learned and tested.
2. Each week, fortnight, half-term or each term (as appropriate for the subject and curriculum time devoted to it) teachers should produce a simple teaching plan, showing how the content of the scheme of work is to be fitted into the available lessons and preps. This is an important exercise. It both prepares the teacher for the period of teaching and encourages reflection on the purpose and goals of what is being taught.

3. Lesson structures vary according to the age and ability of the children, the nature of the topic, the time available, etc. The well-structured lesson is likely to include:

- i **introduction** to the lesson, with the teacher introducing basic concepts etc to be covered and briefly revising the last lesson;
- ii **action**, with the pupils actively developing their knowledge and skills;
- iii **conclusion**, reinforcement and revision.

Clear aims and learning objectives, pupil activity and participation, a good pace, variety of approaches and effective use of time and resources are pre-requisites for a successful lesson.

Appropriate and creative use of resources. Good teaching makes use of a wide range of resources, never over-using one resource and always using resources as an aid to learning rather than as a substitute for teaching.

1. **Worksheets** enable flexibility and the development of a curriculum suited to a class's particular needs. They are useful in testing understanding of a topic. When used in conjunction with information sheets or a textbook they are a valuable aid to learning. They are not to be over-used and their use must not hinder pupils' ability to write in paragraphs or essays. Pupils with specific learning difficulties will suffer if dependent upon their own worksheets for revision etc. The teacher is responsible for developing an appropriate filing system for worksheets, to prevent damage or loss. Worksheets should be created using a word-processing / DTP system. They must be designed to develop and reinforce learning of ideas, skills and knowledge. They need to be presented with variety, visually stimulating, user-friendly, accurate, written in good, clear English, relevant and up-to-date, and directly related to pupils' age and ability level.
2. **Textbooks** reinforce learning and can be more visually stimulating than worksheets. Their use will vary between subjects but when used there should be one copy per pupil.
3. **Videos/DVDs** can be a valuable aid to learning, particularly for those pupils who respond primarily to visual material. A good educational video/DVD takes pupils beyond the confines of the classroom and helps to diminish the abstract nature of some topics. However, videos/DVDs are an effective resource only if used with discretion and in small doses. The use of a video/DVD must be preceded by a clear introduction which places the programme in its learning context (possibly including a complimentary worksheet), and it must be followed by an opportunity for questions and discussion.
4. **Other resources.** Many of the above points apply to other resources also. A good teacher uses a variety of resources. Possibilities include OHPs, audio CDs, CD Roms, slides, objects and artifacts, the library, practical equipment, the school grounds. All resources used must be of good quality, relevant and well-presented. Educational visits are an important educational resource for many subjects. They must have a specific purpose, be carefully planned and be followed up in class.
5. **ICT** as an aid to learning.
6. **Dictating notes** is often not a valuable use of limited class time and it is best to explore other means of imparting information. Pupils must be taught how to lay out notes and those with specific learning difficulties must be given assistance with spelling, presentation, etc.

Task-setting with prompt & frequent feedback. If pupils are to benefit from their studies they need to be set regular tasks and provided with prompt and frequent feedback on their performance. They need frequent help in assessing their existing knowledge and competence and their areas of weakness. How often marked tasks are set will vary but testing work learned should happen with an appropriate degree of frequency. All tasks set must be thoroughly prepared for and understood. They must be marked promptly (see policy) and appropriate feedback given. Pupils must be able to understand the marking system and it must be consistent. Comments on presentation, punctuation etc. should be included in all subjects, not just English.

Setting high standards, respecting diverse talents and encouraging effective use of time. This requires an effective classroom administrative system that is commonly understood and consistently maintained by the teacher. It requires the setting of challenging but realistic tasks; the use of positive incentives; thorough explanation of and preparation for tasks; a building of planning and time-management skills; and the prevention of peer-group pressure deterring a pupil's effort.

A range of teaching methods can be employed to encourage effective use of time. Goal/target-setting (e.g. completion of textbook stage, achievement of certain percentage mark) can be very useful. Goals must be realistic.

The use of exemplar work in teaching demonstrates what is possible. Pupils are to be encouraged to produce fair copies of work (making good use of ICT where appropriate).

Each pupil must be encouraged to fulfil his/her potential. Opportunities must be sought to allow *all* pupils to achieve. The focus of our feedback to each pupil should be positive encouragement. The teacher-pupil relationship must show respect for the pupil's individuality and intelligence. The teacher must never be dismissive if a child has made an effort. We must recognise that children work at varying speeds. Some respond to the pressures of time, others do not.

Bright pupils must be stretched. They must be given the opportunity to collect additional information and develop their skills. Educational visits, personal folders and portfolios of work, and cross-curricular work can be very beneficial. Employing exemplar work in teaching not only encourages other pupils to achieve but rewards and encourages the high achiever.

Teachers must communicate high but realistic expectations related to the ability and age of pupils. There must be school-wide insistence on a high standard of classroom behaviour and manners. All staff must set high personal standards, for example in punctuality, speech and attitude. They must recognise their importance as rôle models. The use of other rôle models, e.g. living poets (perhaps as visitors) can be an important tool in encouraging high standards.

Note on good writing: Good writing is dependent upon the following skills: good grammar, good punctuation, good spelling, good handwriting. All teachers must set and demand high standards in all of these areas, at the same time being sensitive to the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties.

Teaching and learning environment: Classrooms should be kept tidy and in an orderly fashion at all times. Pupils' belongings should be appropriately arranged and the teacher's desk, bookshelves, storage areas etc should be neat and well ordered. It is most important that an effective working environment be maintained at all times. This includes purposeful displays of pupils' work and relevant material.

Lessons must take place in teaching rooms, unless the practical nature of the activity necessitates being outside (eg. P.E, biology practical, measuring area in maths, etc).

Promoting study skills: Study skills are taught by Study Tutors, Form Teachers and within the PSHE course but this work needs to be supplemented by all subject and class teachers, within the context of each subject. It is the responsibility of every teacher to address the issue. Study skills include listening, reading, presentation, planning and target-setting, essay-writing and question-answering, revision and exam technique, note-taking, research and library skills, evaluation. Short practice activities in relation to a skill are a very valuable exercise. Children should be encouraged to assess their own abilities in each area.

Promoting memory skills: Memory skills should also be taught across the curriculum as memory training is an essential part of education. Examples of good practice include:

Lower School: singing maths tables, number bonds practice, poetry learning, chanting in rhythms, word games, number memorisation (up to 6 digits), look-say-cover-write-check, writing in air (whole-arm movements, computer games and other rote-learning).

Mathematics: further tables memorisation, computer programmes, timed memory recall.

English: script-free recitation; mnemonic learning, e.g. parts of speech; spelling - word families/patterns, spelling games.

Languages: vocabulary learning (look-say-cover-write-check); mnemonics for conjugations and declensions; picture mnemonics for prepositions; anagrams.

Science: constant revision, checking-back preps, good writing-up procedures; constant development of basic principles.

Music: repetition; visual memorisation; oral memorisation; "clapping back" tunes.

Effective preparation of pupils for exams: Every teacher must provide specific guidance on revision and exam preparation. Revision programmes should be incorporated into programmes of study at appropriate times (eg. during the first half of the Summer term for C.E. candidates.) Study Tutors and Form Teachers are to provide back-up and support. In many cases children think they are working hard but in fact are not using their time effectively. Pupils need:

- a) a list of appropriate topics and concepts to learn
- b) well-organised notes and reference material

- c) a plan/timetable - little and often is better than lots occasionally
- d) to distinguish between active and passive mental activity
- e) guidance in making visual charts, using mnemonics and tape recorders
- f) guidance in learning vocabulary actively - how to revise in pairs or groups
- g) guidance on where best to revise and when best to revise.

Effective exam technique is very important in C.E., scholarship and other exams. Teachers should give advice and practice in exam technique during lessons prior to exams. Particular guidance should be given to pupils concerning:

- i) dividing their time sensibly, allocating appropriate lengths of time to each question and section of the exam
 - ii) accurate reading and understanding of questions and instructions
 - iii) recognition of appropriate length and type of answer required
 - iv) allowing time for checking through their work at the end of the exam and how to go about doing this.