



Bishop Aldhelm's C.E. Primary School

Loved by God; United in Learning

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*Love, Unity,
Courage
and Inspiration*

The Bishop Aldhelm's Curriculum

At Bishop Aldhelm's we use the National Curriculum as our starting point. This sets the objectives that we follow across all subjects. We deliver these objectives through a curriculum that focuses on vocabulary, knowledge and skills with a clear progression from EYFS to Year 6. This document will outline the rationale behind our curriculum.

All subject overviews have the following information:

- How our values of love, unity, courage and inspiration are displayed within the subject
- How all children, including those with SEN, can access the subject
- Local area links specifically for the subject
- What we want children leaving Bishop Aldhelm's to be able to do in each subject. This is how the subject will help children in the next stage of their life, not about the specific knowledge that they will be taught.

The follow information breaks down the rationale for each aspect:

Vocabulary:

At the age of 5 a child who has a difficulty with their vocabulary is:

- 6 times less likely to reach ARE English age 11
- 10 times less likely to reach ARE in maths age 11
- Twice as likely to be unemployed in 30's, as children with good vocabulary but similar ability
- 1.5 times more likely to have mental health problems

Early language is the most important factor in influencing literacy levels at age 11 and can be tracked forwards to still having significant influence beyond GCSE. Research suggests that the challenges start early on in a child's development and that by the age of three, there is a 30-million-word gap between children from the wealthiest and poorest families. A study by Fernald, Marchman, & Weisleder 2013 showed that the vocabulary gap is evident in toddlers: By 18 months, children in different socio-economic groups display dramatic differences in their vocabularies. Even at two years of age, the disparity in vocabulary development is significant.

In recent years, the gap in vocabulary has been highlighted even further through the changes to the testing at the end of KS2. In the 2017 KS2 SATs 20% of questions centred around understanding vocabulary in context (Shareen Mayers 2017). Following a gap analysis of question type, it is clear that we need to put more in place to help our children succeed.

By teaching and introducing more vocabulary in the curriculum, progress can be made, and it is possible to close this gap. A year 5 child who is a free reader will encounter approximately 1 million words throughout the year, 20,000 of which are likely to be unfamiliar (Oakhill et. al. 2015).

Bishop Aldhelm's C.E. Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all our children.
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As a result, all topics begin with a vocabulary lesson, ensuring that children have a secure understanding of a wide range of specific vocabulary. The emphasis on vocabulary is clear around the school in terms of displays and the language used with the children.

Knowledge:

In an influential study from the USA, Recht & Leslie showed that prior knowledge increased the ability of children to learn new skills. They demonstrated that when tested for understanding of a text about baseball, poor readers with high knowledge of baseball did far better than good readers with low knowledge. No matter how skilled they are as readers, children cannot fully understand what they are reading unless they know the meaning of the words and references in the text. Moreover, new knowledge is acquired through situating it within existing knowledge; the more a child knows, the more they are capable of learning.

High levels of background knowledge can compensate for poor comprehension skills. It has been demonstrated that poor comprehenders with elaborate knowledge about a certain topic are able to reach the same level of understanding as good comprehenders when reading a text that relates to their knowledge (Recht & Leslie, 1988).

Skills:

As well as learning and remembering more knowledge, it is important that children are taught specific skills. Sometimes these skills are specific for a task whilst others can be generalised across different areas of learning.

“The focus on imparting knowledge does not mean that we dismiss the value of pupils acquiring skills and, indeed, we feel that schools should offer a balance of approaches. However, we also recognise that pupils cannot be taught skills in a vacuum and benefit from expert, teacher-led instruction in order to acquire secure subject knowledge as a platform for their learning.” (The Question of Knowledge, 2017.)

Local area links:

For every subject, teachers are aware through planning overviews about links to the local area and how they can be used and developed. A number of our children are not familiar with the environment beyond the road where they live. We therefore feel that it is important that we teach our children about the history, geography and industrial importance of our area. Our annual ‘Dream Job Day’ is a way that we encourage our children to aim high and branch out their understanding about what might be available to them in the future. These local area links help develop children’s economic understanding about how the community around them operates as well as to help raise their aspirations for their own future.

General Knowledge:

According to E.D. Hirsch: General knowledge proves to be more important for learning than parents, peers and neighbourhood combined (though of course, those factors influence one’s breadth of knowledge).

In subjects such as art and music, we have included a focus artist/musician or type of music, for every topic. We feel that by exposing children to a range of artists throughout their primary education, they will have a breadth of knowledge and awareness before specialising in secondary school. This cultural knowledge helps develop their appreciation for different key figures.

Lifeskills:

We have an enrichment life skills curriculum that the HLTAs lead during PPA. During this time, children learn about a range of topics including first aid, communication, money matters, public speak and personal safety. We feel strongly that children should be taught these aspects to help them succeed in life.

Bishop Aldhelm's Awards:

We introduced these in 2017. This was to encourage children and their families to interact with our local area. The 'Bishop Aldhelm's Award' is a set of activities and skills for children to complete inside and outside of school. There are two stages to the award: one for EYFS/KS1 and the other for KS2, with 25 activities to do in each stage. Once the children have completed the activities, they receive a Bishop Aldhelm's Badge. Children enjoy working towards these awards across the school.

Cultural Diversity Focus:

The % of our children with EAL and from ethnic minorities is lower than the national average, although it is increasing. As a result we have put in place different projects and topics to help extend our children's understanding of the world around them.

Since 2017 we have hosted Chinese visitors 3 times a year. The students take part in learning in class alongside our children. We also have global youth ambassadors who work with the students all week and share experiences with them such as English culture lessons and organising and running a cream team afternoon.

For the last 3 years, we have all sent a group of 10 year 5 children to China to experience the culture and school experience. They have then shared their experiences with the rest of KS2 through assemblies. We also have links with a school in Cherbourg, France. Our year 6 children are linked with a penfriend from the school in Cherbourg. They write to each other throughout the year. In June, the French children come to visit and our children get to meet their penfriends in real life.

Our French Club, open to all KS2 children, also have the opportunity to go on a school trip to France to experience the culture and visit our link school.

In addition to these opportunities, Year 5 children study a 'culture and diversity' topic through their BABA curriculum. This topic looks at different aspects of inclusivity such as refugees and LGBT so that the children have this awareness in their lives.

Subject Leadership:

Subject leaders have a mapped out overview about how they monitor each subject, including using pupil voice to see how children view subjects. This also allows leaders to check whether knowledge has been remembered.

At the beginning of term, during an Inset, subject leaders had 5 minutes to present/sell their subject, convincing the rest of the staff why their subject was important. This was a very valuable and inspiring task that not only raised leaders' confidence in their area but also increased awareness in all aspects of the curriculum.

Subject leaders work closely with the Headship Team to develop their own skills as leaders.