



Our Educational Philosophy

- **Teaching, Learning and Assessment**
- **Curriculum and Professional Development at The John Fisher School**

We believe that:

- Excellent quality teaching, learning and assessment are characterised by supportive teachers with high expectations.
- Motivated, happy and confident students achieve their full potential.
- The learning environment should be safe, caring, challenging and stimulating.
- Students should feel confident and valued in their contributions - regardless of ability, experiences or culture.
- The curriculum must be balanced and broad based - designed to cater for individual needs and develop individual brilliance.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Learning is a lifelong process that is not restricted to the classroom. Staff and students bring a range of cultures and experiences that are drawn upon to enrich and stimulate the school environment. The central focus is the learning that takes place in the classroom, but lifelong learning is also embedded in the ethos of the school as a whole. The classroom must be safe, professional, and collaborative, allowing students to feel at ease to express their views, share experiences, and discuss differences of opinion. Our curriculum is taught in a way that allows every student to make outstanding progress, whatever their starting point and our target is to ensure that every student is equipped to progress to further education or training, and fulfil their career ambitions. Whilst our approach incorporates many traditional elements, our Curriculum is designed to cater for individual needs and develop individual brilliance.

Within the curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on numeracy and literacy at all Key Stages. All students grow to be confident at analysing information, expressing ideas and supporting their arguments persuasively, and to the widest possible audience. The development of oracy remains one of our key strategic priorities for this academic year. Our curriculum also supports spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by exposing students to the best that has been thought, written, invented and created as an expression of the human spirit. Above all, the curriculum is flexible enough to accommodate students' individual needs and to support everyone to achieve ambitious targets.

A robust approach to teaching and learning has helped the school achieve consistently high outcomes at both Key Stage 4 and 5. The strength of subject specialists has helped achieve excellent outcomes in a broad curriculum and this reflects both teacher expertise and the recruitment process. Lessons aim to engage learners with a wide range of activities and assessment for learning techniques. Learners are encouraged to take the lead during lesson time, with student leadership a key focus in the school. Teachers are actively given opportunities to discuss differentiation and assessment.

The focus on outstanding teaching, learning and assessment underpins the annual lesson observation cycle. Four steps undertaken during the cycle:

1. The first observation is led by SLT or Line Managers paired with Subject Leaders.
2. The other two observations allow staff to choose their classes and focus, linking in with their appraisal and whole school targets.
3. Teaching and learning is also monitored via culture walks which allow SLT to drop into lessons on an informal basis.
4. Every year group takes part in an annual Review Day which has a specific focus – most usually teaching and learning related. These Review Days, which Governors attend, involve scrutiny of books, culture walks, student interviews, teacher interviews and latterly parent/carer interviews.

We are committed to providing our students with an inspiring academic experience which is student-centred and stimulating. Catholic religious education is the core subject of the curriculum to which all other subjects relate. The school seeks excellence in all subject areas: Maths, English, Sciences, Modern Foreign Languages, Creative Arts, the Humanities, Physical Education and competitive sport.

We live in a world that depends on communication and collaboration and the ability to work in a global context. Being able to communicate fluently in English is very valuable, but every student also learns Spanish or French in practical, engaging language lessons through to

GCSE and both languages are offered at A-level. We also provide the opportunity for students to study Mandarin, Latin, Portuguese and Italian as an extracurricular activity.

We are deeply committed to opening the hearts and minds of our students in every way. We have an outstanding enrichment provision, including sports, arts, clubs and societies, leadership opportunities and challenge activities, that all support the development of the whole person. We believe that this will continue to lead to memorable experiences and outstanding examination outcomes for our students.

The religious needs of our students, who have varied faith experiences and a diversity of beliefs are served. We strive for inclusion – the diversity of students and staff is celebrated, and this builds self-esteem and a sense of community. We cultivate an attitude of mutual respect within our school community, and parents and families are encouraged to work in partnership with the school and our feeder parishes.

The students' faith development is deepened by prayer. We provide worship opportunities for students throughout the school (prayer, reflection, liturgies) including small groups, year groups and the whole school, which are appropriate to their backgrounds and faith experiences. These worshipping opportunities promote a strong community sense of service for each other. Inclusive worship helps students to grow in confidence in prayer and develop a relationship with God. We nurture, support and challenge the students to live out and to give witness to our common mission in their everyday experience of school life, and by developing their sense of responsibility to play their part in caring activities in the wider community.

We are proud to embed British values, traditions and education through our House system, competitive sport, clubs, choirs, performances and other events. This breadth of education allows students to learn through experience, with the unifying theme of excellence as part of our common mission. Each student leaves our school understanding a range of viewpoints, values and cultures, developing respect for diversity and an understanding of their obligations and responsibilities towards others.

The quality of relationships leads our students and staff to have a feeling of belonging, community and acceptance which is confirmed by the spirit of service, given and received by each person within the school. Adults and students witnessing to the common mission of The John Fisher School informs everything, and this is reflected in our policies and the lived experience of the whole community.

Professional Development

CPD is designed and led by staff at various levels within the school. Through the CPD Pathway programme, teaching colleagues are given the opportunity to identify areas of interest that they wish to follow on a termly basis. These areas, alongside the whole school foci, form the foundations of a personalised CPD programme. High performing staff are given the opportunity to lead a pathway or develop their own interest whereas those who require support are allocated to the specific pathway which best suits their needs. The pathways are decided by staff through survey feedback, as well as the feedback from observation cycles and appraisal targets. By triangulating these three areas, the CPD pathways remain relevant, personalised and engaging. The use of external organisations to aid CPD is encouraged and this has led to work with, for example, local primary schools and specialists from pupil referral units.

Whole staff CPD is used in tandem with the pathway programme and allows topics such as Mental Health and Safeguarding to be delivered in a timely and cohesive manner. Staff are encouraged to seek external courses to help develop subject knowledge and keep up to date with changes in education. Our staff run training for local primary schools in MFL and Maths and more recently, we have hosted the local secondary school subject meetings in English and MFL. In Business and Economics, Sport and Geography, our staff have led the implementation and training of new specifications and courses in local secondary schools. All safeguarding CPD is delivered via external agencies and key issues are addressed frequently. Through our observation cycles, all colleagues are involved in paired observations, which then serve as timely CPD. Lessons observed are discussed prior to feedback, and TLR post holders are encouraged to act as lead observers. For cycle 3, we encourage teachers to work on specific areas of challenge in triads. Before and after each cycle, teachers receive feedback on strengths and areas of focus.

Subject Leaders are encouraged to attend PiXL (Partners in Excellence) conferences as a key part of the CPD programme and then to feed back across the Subject Leader group. The Raising Standards Leader attends each half termly Main Meeting and provides feedback on initiatives via SLT and the SL group. SLs have met fortnightly on Fridays for a number of years to develop and respond to initiatives. This is invaluable CPD for colleagues who have been able to develop an understanding of wider school issues such as finance and curriculum planning.

Conclusion

We celebrate individuality and our aim is to produce young people with belief in themselves, confidence to pursue their ambitions, the resilience to succeed, and the desire to make a real and positive contribution to society.