

## St James Draft Curriculum Rationale 2022-23

### 1. Subject Content

***At the core of our ambitious learning culture is a broad, knowledge-rich curriculum, which is cohesive, cumulative and effectively sequenced.*** Our curriculum is academic, rigorous and challenging, and designed with long-term memory in mind; students' knowledge, skills and understanding are cemented by frequent and systematic revisiting.

The following central principles underpin our approach to the curriculum and planning at St James and in the Ted Wragg Trust:

- Academic excellence
- Robust research
- Coherent sequencing
- Effective assessment
- Rich knowledge
- Inspired choices

**Academic excellence:** our curriculum is academic, rigorous and challenging: tier two vocabulary and complex concepts are taught from year seven.

**Robust research:** our learning model and sequenced learning are underpinned by the cognitive science work of Daniel T. Willingham. Designed with long-term memory in mind, our curriculum ensures that students' knowledge, skills and understanding are cemented by frequent and systematic revisiting.

**Coherent sequencing:** our curriculum is based on the understanding that students arrive with significant prior knowledge, a foundation that we build upon from day one.

**Effective assessment:** we believe that assessment is an intrinsic part of successful curriculum planning and effective teaching and learning. We use frequent, efficient assessment both to empower students to become highly effective independent and resilient learners and to reduce teacher workload. We use data and assessment systematically to inform planning to ensure rapid and sustained progress for every student. Through regular retrieval practice, spaced learning and interleaving, we embed knowledge into the long-term memory.

**Rich knowledge:** we believe that our high-quality curriculum ensures that our students learn both declarative (what and why) and procedural (how) knowledge. Declarative knowledge includes the **substantive knowledge** required to connect prior learning with new, as well as the contextual **disciplinary knowledge** which leads to their ability to connect learning between subject domains.

**Inspired choices:** we provide a curriculum which rich and varied, allowing students to specialise in their foundation subjects, fostering that passion early, whilst providing additional time for Geography and History, subjects pivotal to learning about our place in the world around us.

### 2. Numeracy/Literacy

***Time is focused on the deliberate teaching of reading and writing strategies and number mastery to ensure all pupils develop reading, writing and number fluency, improving both their access to, and performance across, the curriculum.*** Students who need extra support in English and Maths are quickly identified and this additional support is put in place through extra curriculum time.

#### Reading fluency

Before pupils can successfully move from decoding to comprehension, they must develop fluency in reading, meaning that they can read with intonation, prosody, speed and stamina. This is overtly taught and students' engagement in reading at KS3 is tracked using Sparx Reader.

We test and report reading age termly and where students' ages are below their chronology, they complete intervention, with small group teaching and/or Lexia.

### **Writing fluency**

At KS3, writing fluency is taught through the deliberate teaching of sentence construction, explicitly focusing on the main clause and the addition of other component parts. We explicitly teach this knowledge and practise its application through the English common curriculum. This allows pupils to structure and punctuate sentences with reason, thus improving their writing fluency and reducing their cognitive load.

### **Number fluency**

We develop number fluency by teaching and practising three main components: number bonds, to develop students who can complete efficient and accurate calculations; procedural knowledge so that students can apply a flexible range of approaches to calculation; and conceptual knowledge so that students understand the mathematical principle behind procedures. This is overtly taught and practised, and supported by the use of Sparx in both the classroom and for homework.

### **Vocabulary Instruction**

We explicitly pre-teach tier two and tier three vocabulary across all subjects. We then revisit and utilise this vocabulary throughout the cycle so that pupils master its use.

### **The canon**

We have a literary canon, a collection of texts that holds significant value both in the style of writing and in their message. Our canon includes voices from a range of ethnicities and religions, as well as narratives from a range of women and those who are LGBTQ+.

We allocate 20 minutes four times per week to the canon and read at least four books per year group each year.

## **3. Curriculum Structure and Timetabling**

***Across the entirety of KS3, our students study a broad range of subjects, including the full suite of EBACC subjects and a range of arts. At KS4, pupils specialise with their options whilst maintaining a breadth of EBACC GCSEs.***

We believe that our students have the unalienable right to a five-year learning journey which is not just about an end-point of GCSEs but a time of discovery, a time of awakening a passion for subjects, and a time for acquiring knowledge and skills which will support their futures studies and their working lives.

With this in mind, we provide a curriculum which rich and varied and which follows the national curriculum in years 7 and 8. As we move into year 9, we allow students to specialise in their foundation subjects, fostering that passion early, whilst providing additional curriculum time for the humanities and modern foreign languages, allowing teachers to teach beyond the limits of the national curriculum. At the end of year 9, students complete their final options for GCSE study. During the options process we advise students about their progress and their likelihood of success to support them in making choices. We support students to study a broad range of subjects and encourage a language selection.

## **4. Cycles**

***Our curriculum is delivered in twelve-week cycles, comprising contextualising learning, introducing new content, assessing and addressing knowledge gaps and misconceptions.***

The school year is divided into three cycles of twelve weeks. Each cycle comprises ten teaching weeks during which students cover new topics, each one building on knowledge of previous learning and cycles. The eleventh week is an assessment week when all students in Years 7-11 complete tests and other assessments in every subject to analyse their strengths and weaknesses in current and previous cycles. In the twelfth week, intervention week, teachers re-teach areas that students have struggled with in the assessments. The first lesson of every cycle is a contextual lesson where the teacher outlines what will be covered within the cycle and how it prepares students for final examination.

### **Context week**

Students understand what will be involved in their learning across the cycle, what the final assessment will require of them and where the scheme fits within the wider picture of whole school learning. Exploration of careers helps to link learning to the world of work, fostering curiosity and ambition, empowering our students for an unpredictable future

Students are supported by the pre-teaching of tier two and three vocabulary to support learning later on in the cycle. Additionally, baseline knowledge tests to allow for individualised planning, and to set the bar for successes later on in the cycle.

### **Weeks 2 – 10**

Pupils are taught new declarative knowledge (both substantive and disciplinary) and procedural knowledge. They are given the opportunity to apply this procedural knowledge in in class tasks and they partake in weekly retrieval testing to consolidate their declarative knowledge. Core subjects complete two mid-cycle assessments and non-core complete one, which provides formative feedback for students and provides planning intelligence for teachers.

### **Assessment week**

During assessment week, students practice the independent retrieval and application of knowledge. Through this, they build independence and resilience, whilst also developing focus and concentration. Students develop skills that enable them to work independently, drawing on a schema of knowledge, synthesising information and applying it in a range of contexts. Students also develop stamina as writers, and high expectations of themselves and their performance at all levels.

SEND students are provided with pre-agreed support to create opportunities for success and to enable them to maximise their use of examination dispensation.

### **Intervention week**

Students are reminded of the importance of reading backwards to read forwards – that all of our learning is built on prior learning. With their teachers' support, they address gaps and misconceptions in their learning, always re-attempting a section of their assessment to consolidate their feedback.

## **5. Assessments**

***Assessment is an intrinsic part of successful curriculum planning and effective teaching and learning. We use frequent, efficient assessment low stakes assessment to embed learning, regular formative assessment to inform planning and feedback and termly summative assessment to track progress.***

### **Low stakes assessment**

We plan low stakes assessment into our lessons as through this regular retrieval practice that is spaced and interleaved, we embed knowledge into the long-term memory. Students complete their low stakes testing to check they have learned the key declarative knowledge from both their lessons

and knowledge organisers that is core to their curriculum. This is usually in the form of 'Do Now' tasks that begin all our lessons.

We are committed to using frequent, efficient assessment both to empower students to become highly effective independent and resilient learners but also recognise the impact this can have on teacher workload. Therefore, where possible, our low stakes assessments are automated so that they provide immediate accurate and assessable data whilst reducing teacher workload. Teachers utilise the data generated from low stakes assessments to identify gaps in learning and misconceptions. Teachers then address their gaps in knowledge through correction and revisiting.

### **Formative assessment**

Students complete mid-cycle formative assessments across all of their subjects. These assessments test the declarative knowledge (both substantive and disciplinary) taught – the what and why – as well as procedural knowledge - the how. In written subjects, this will often be through an extended piece of writing; in maths, it will be through problem solving whilst in practical subjects, it may be a practical task or performance.

Teachers assess this work using a clear success criteria and give students formative feedback about how to develop their work, identifying gaps in learning and misconceptions. They then adjust their planning and interventions to address these to ensure rapid and sustained progress for every student.

### **Summative assessment**

In week eleven of each cycle, students complete summative assessments across all of their subjects. These assessments come in two parts:

- **A knowledge assessment** (declarative knowledge - both substantive and disciplinary) that assesses what students have retained in their long-term memory. These assessments are formed of short answer retrieval questions and multiple-choice questions. These assessments are given a percentage score.
- **An application assessment** (both procedural and declarative) where students apply their knowledge to a task, such as extended writing, problem solving or performance. These assessments are marked against an agreed mark schemes (default is GCSE or derivative) and given a mark and percentage score.

## **6. Homework**

***We use homework to support pupils in mastering both declarative and procedural knowledge through spaced, interleaved revisiting and practice.***

Across years 7-10, for the majority of subjects, homework is completed through knowledge organisers. These support the mastery of domain specific substantive knowledge as well as the required subject vocabulary that is pivotal to students' success across a cycle of learning. Students complete three subjects (twenty minutes each) per evening of knowledge organiser work, totalling one hour in their homework books.

In maths, students complete one hour of Sparx homework per week, alongside additional target work. In KS3, students complete one hour of Sparx Reader per week.

## **7. The wider offer**

***Our wider curriculum offer is designed to enrich and broaden the experience of the students in our schools, developing their cultural capital and social, emotional and physical wellbeing.***

Our Electives program runs from 3pm until 4.45pm every Wednesday. All students partake in an activity that is designed to broaden their social and cultural experience. Each cycle, students select a

new elective and they must partake in one elective from each of the following three categories each academic year: creative, active, service/skill.

Currently, we offer the following selection of electives, all of which are free to students, thanks to our community sponsors:

| <b>Creativity</b>         | <b>Activity</b>                       | <b>Service/Skill</b>             |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Art (Painting & Drawing)  | Bowls                                 | Charity & Environment            |
| Craft                     | Couch to 5k                           | Cooking                          |
| Creative Writing          | Cricket                               | Cycling & Bike maintenance       |
| International Cinema Club | Golf                                  | Debating Team                    |
| Marvel Comics             | Gym and Strength                      | Electronic Music production      |
| Movie / Media Club        | Karate & Kickboxing                   | Esports & Programming            |
| Print Making              | Outdoor Education (10 tors)           | Gardening / Re-wilding           |
| School band               | Roller skating                        | Learn German                     |
| Show in a cycle           | Skiing                                | Learn Italian                    |
| Textiles                  | Spin Class                            | Magistrates' Court Trial         |
|                           | Trampolining                          | Mindful Puzzles                  |
|                           | Ultimate frisbee                      | Model Building Y7                |
|                           | Witness the fitness                   | Model Building Y8, 9 and 10      |
|                           | Yoga and coping with stress<br>Y10/11 | Philosophy Group                 |
|                           | Yoga Y7&Y8                            | Psychology research project      |
|                           |                                       | Sea safety                       |
|                           |                                       | Supporting another elective      |
|                           |                                       | The League of Master Strategists |

Extra-curricular activities run daily across our schools and include a minimum offer of physical activity, arts clubs and peripatetic music lessons. Duke of Edinburgh and Ten Tours is also offered across all of our schools and at least annual drama/music performances. Pupils who are disadvantaged are financially supported to ensure they can engage in a range of extra-curricular activities.

We are working towards 100% of the Gatsby Benchmarks and all out pupils receive the following:

- Work experience
- 1:1 careers appointment
- Careers advice sessions