



WESTCOUNTRY
SCHOOLS TRUST



The WeST Curriculum
Underlying Principles
Secondary

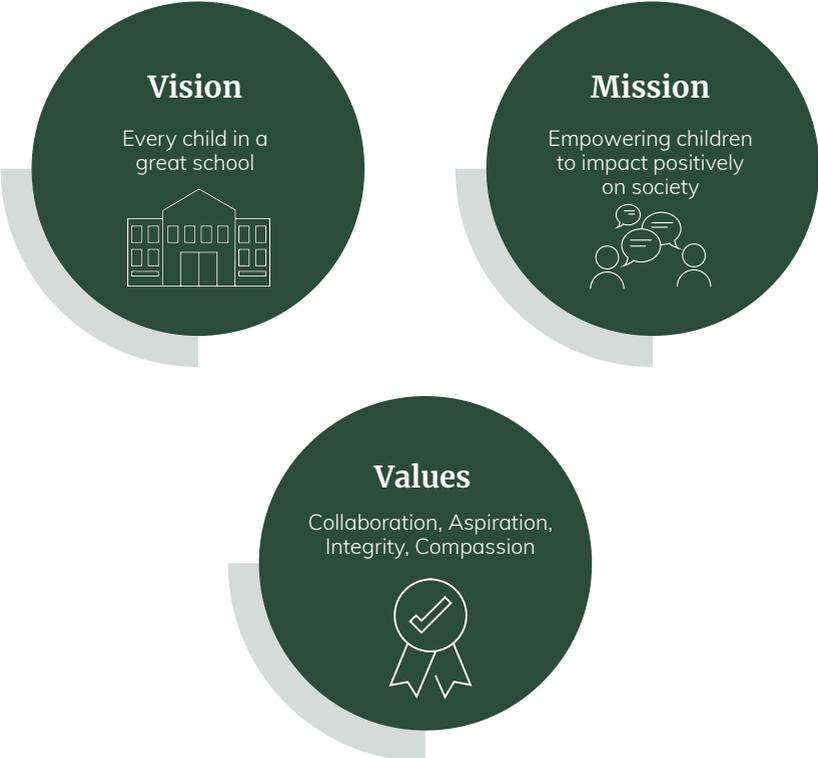
Stronger Together...
Every Child in a
Great School

Life-changing Learning



Our Vision, Mission and Values

While all our schools retain their own identity, we are a united family who share a common Vision, Mission, and Values. We believe that by working collectively, we are stronger and can provide the very best education for our children.





Four moral arguments for an ambitious curriculum

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Cognitive

If we can give pupils an education that is rich with well-chosen knowledge, we can help them to become better thinkers, problem solvers, and future learners with all the benefits these attributes bring.



Socioeconomic

Pupils who have studied a strong curriculum will be better equipped to gain excellent qualifications, pursue careers that demand such qualifications, and access the socioeconomic rewards of these careers.



Democratic

Pupils who have studied a powerful curriculum will be better equipped to read and understand news and commentary, to question and challenge ideas, and to participate in a healthy democracy. Democracy depends on the populace being well-educated to keep a check on threats such as fake news, propaganda and extremism.



Intellectual

It should be the social entitlement of every child, from every household and every background to learn about the best of what has been thought and said and to have such knowledge passed on so that the fires are burning brightly for them when it is their turn.

Key features and rationale for change

Key features

- Standard subject weightings in each school
- A strong emphasis on the use of common assessment and its positive impact on curriculum design and teaching
- Aligned examination specifications at GCSE
- Four GCSE options

Rationale for change

- Equity – we propose four moral arguments for an ambitious curriculum. We see the curriculum as a model for social justice.
- COVID-19 and lost learning – we are currently living through the most disrupted period of education for children in recent history. It is imperative therefore that we ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils.
- Resource efficiency – making full use of Integrated Curriculum and Financial Planning (ICFP) to achieve educational success and financial sustainability without compromising on quality.
- People and partners – supporting all staff to develop and flourish in their careers through freedom of movement across the trust. Developing great teachers and leaders of the future.



The WeST secondary curriculum is underpinned by the following principles:

As WeST schools, we believe in:

Breadth of curriculum: students learning a broad range of subjects for as long as possible before specialising. All schools will follow a three-year Key Stage 3, with a 50-hour, two-week cycle because of the flexibility it offers. Five WeST schools currently have this structure in place and two schools will transition to this model for September 2023. In addition to the core subjects we will provide all learners with access to four GCSE or equivalent choices at Key Stage 4, each of 5 hours a fortnight in Year 10 and in Year 11. Relevant non-examined opportunities and courses where this is felt to be more likely to lead to success for an individual will be provided for the relatively small number of learners for whom four academic qualifications may not be appropriate.

All learners must secure the basics: Mathematics and English should be prominent to support our structure. This allows all young people access to the wider curriculum and the opportunities presented both within school and for life after school, but not so dominant at the expense of other subjects. We recognise that for some learners, non-GCSE qualifications and awards may be appropriate steppingstones to success in Literacy and Numeracy.

Access to an academic curriculum for all: we want to maximise EBacc take-up at Key Stage 4 and will actively pursue this through a compulsory Humanities choice and a recommended Modern Foreign Language (MFL) choice for most. EBacc subjects need the time afforded at Key Stage 3 to provide a strong platform for success at Key Stage 4. We recognise that MFL is the biggest barrier to attaining the EBacc in our schools but recognise that 'MFL for all' is not an appropriate approach. However, all students who wish to continue studying a language to GCSE should be supported to do so.

Rich, carefully sequenced curriculum planning: we recognise the curriculum structure is a facilitator for high-quality curriculum planning by subject specialists. It also allows for curriculum alignment, common assessment, sharing of resources (including staffing), deep and rich subject-specific Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and a reduction in staff workload. We commit to sharing

time, resources and expertise to collectively plan and deliver an exceptional curriculum in each subject area. All WeST leaders have an aspiration to maximise outcomes for all our young people, no matter their starting point, ability, or background. We share a firm belief that we are stronger together in our quest to fulfil this ambition and ensure that every child attends a great school.

Modern Foreign Language: we will focus on learning one language for the majority, with most encouraged to continue the core language through to GCSE. We will provide access to a second language at Key Stage 4 to support able linguists and progression to A Level languages and beyond. We recognise the demands of starting a second language in Year 10 and completing a GCSE in five terms. Careful consideration and flexibility at a localised level will be considered as to how we best support our dual linguists to achieve success.

Science: should lead into Combined Science - a pathway that facilitates access to A Level sciences and progression beyond into STEM subjects and into medical professions - for all our learners. This is a minimum expectation. WeST schools will endeavour to offer separate sciences as an option at Key Stage 4 to support those young people with a significant interest in STEM. We will lead the development of a science curriculum from Year 7 - Year 11 and ensure a sustainable model of delivery that will lead to the very best outcomes whether in combined science or separate sciences.

Physical Education: we are committed to the health and wellbeing of our young people and will endeavour to offer at least 3 hours a fortnight at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The taught curriculum will be enhanced by a rich and inclusive extra-curricular PE provision in our schools.

Computing: should be included as a discrete subject at Key Stage 3 and as an option at Key Stage 4. Our computer science and information technology (IT) curriculum specialists will craft a sequenced curriculum across Year 7 - Year 9 to ensure all learners have access to the full range of content referenced in the National Curriculum. Our aim is to develop students' capability, creativity and

knowledge in computer science, digital media and IT, as well as computational thinking skills.

Personal Science Health Education/Relationships and Sex Education:

Now more than ever, young people need a robust PSHE/RSE education and experience. We believe that PSHE/RSE should be delivered as a discrete subject in the timetable at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and not simply through tutor time. It should be delivered by a specialist team of staff, supplemented by drop-down days where necessary.

Religious Education: should be taught to all across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, alongside a GCSE option for those who choose it. We will consider the Agreed Local Syllabus carefully when devising the curriculum.

Art/Design and Technology/Music/Drama: should all be taught as discrete subjects by specialists at Key Stage 3; society needs creative thinkers and students well-versed in the arts. These subjects should be offered at Key Stage 4 as an option for all, and actively promoted to provide breadth and balance to a strong academic curriculum diet.

Forensic Reading: should be taught as a discrete subject at Key Stage 3 to help establish a strong foundation of knowledge, vocabulary, understanding, phraseology and experience. Such an approach helps form a basis for success in accessing challenging, complex and academic texts. We will deliver and embed forensic reading at Key Stage 3 in the first instance, and conduct a thorough evaluation of impact prior to any future roll out into Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5.

Examination entry: students should take examinations at the point of maximum maturity and when content has been studied in the appropriate level of depth. This means we will not pursue early entry as a rule. The exceptions would be for EAL and bilingual students entering exams in a language they speak at home. Alternatively for SEND students securing qualifications and awards as part of a stepped curriculum to success.



