

Designing and implementing the first phase of a knowledge-rich and values-based curriculum

Spotlight on St. John's Church of England Academy

Why did the school get involved?

At St. John's, the vision is clear- We are a family with a strong set of shared values. These values enable all members of our community to 'shine'; to 'flourish' academically but also to shine pastorally as confident, happy citizens of the world.

When we began LAWEP with Whole Education we were in the early stages of redesigning our curriculum, a key priority on our development plan.

Our intent was clear- we wanted to excite, engage and inspire pupils with a relevant, inclusive, values-based and memorable curriculum that made learning irresistible. We wanted children to embed their understanding of the core values we've developed as a community, the core values that we believe make our school special and enable our children to shine and grow into respectful, global citizens.

This vision aligns completely with Whole Education's vision of providing more than a fully rounded education. That is why we wanted to get involved with LAWEP: to ignite children's curiosity, raise aspirations and instil a passion for lifelong learning.

What has been most helpful working with WE?

LAWEP has provided us with an opportunity to learn. Through inspirational speakers, we had time to reflect on who we are as a school and why we are here.

We also valued the visits to other schools. There were a wide range of schools on offer which allowed us the opportunity to find the 'best fit' visits for us. As a result of visiting one school, they agreed to support us with an aspect we were keen to develop; this would never have happened if it hadn't been for Whole Education.



Context:

One-form entry school for children aged between 4 -11 years old.

At our last OFSTED inspection in 2015, we were rated 'Good'. Since then, we have continued to make substantial progress; this was acknowledged in our 'Excellent' SIAMS judgement in November a judgement held by only 10% of church schools across England.

Within the last 5 years, we have been in the top 5 schools in the city of Coventry for attainment at the end of KS2.

In 2019, we were 2nd in the city for Y6 combined SATs results and 1st for children achieving 'greater depth' in Maths and SPAG.

“Although academic results are obviously important, strong core values, wellbeing and consistent pastoral care are just as important in helping our children to flourish- both within and beyond our school. It's a special time to be learning and working at St. John's!”

What did the school do in their project?

As part of our project, we:

- + Refined the role of subject leaders in our school and our expectations of them
- + Used the curriculum vision to create 'The St. John's approach' documents for all subjects- 'what we do' and 'why we do what we do'; this included enrichment opportunities!
- + Implemented professional learning 'surgeries' during the school day to enable Senior Leaders and Subject Leaders to work together to develop 'Knowledge, Skills and Vocabulary' routeways for each subject.
- + Generated 'Topic Maps' and 'Knowledge Organisers' with each class teacher and shared these with parents termly.
- + Increased parental engagement through 'Come and Share' and 'Time to Shine' sessions.
- + Designed new topic books, aligning them to our curriculum vision
- + Further developed expectations for 'Topic Books' with a clear focus on knowledge, vocabulary and skills
- + Developed an approach for embedding knowledge across the school. This included: vocabulary checks, knowledge pitstops, knowledge books and daily knowledge and skills reflections
- + Developed enrichment overviews across subjects
- + Designed a new monitoring overview

What are the next steps for St. John's?

Whilst we have made significant improvements to our curriculum, we recognise that there are always ways in which we can further develop. As our curriculum is newly implemented, we will continue to embed our strategies and processes this year. In addition to this, our aims are to:

- + Implement and review the effectiveness of our new monitoring and evaluation plan
- + Further develop subject leaders in the implementation of their subjects- including monitoring
- + Further assess the impact of our knowledge strategies on the children's long-term memory



Impact so far:

1. Increased confidence in staff with staff proud to showcase and discuss outcomes.

"The curriculum is clear and progressive, subject leaders are now able to share 'what we do' and 'why we do it'"

2. Curriculum is relevant, resulting in more children being engaged.

3. Book monitoring with children has shown clear improvement in the sequence with lots of opportunities to re-visit prior knowledge.

4. Parents more informed and therefore more engaged and offer support with their knowledge and expertise

5. Schools within our Trust have visited us to see our 'best practice' and schools within Coventry have visited us to look at our curriculum offer in action and have used our ideas in their settings

Any advice for schools starting their Whole Education journey?

"Make the most of the networking opportunities. Strong links with highly effective schools can make all the difference in your journey towards 'excellence'."

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