

Curriculum Statement 2025/26

I have come that you may have life - life in all its fullness (John 10:10)

We love, we pray, we learn, we play

Bishop Ellis is a place where **all** are valued as a child of God, where everyone is enabled to mature towards their full growth in Christ and achieve their potential. Through our curriculum we ensure that, with enthusiasm and celebration, the message of Jesus Christ is at the centre of all we do. We aim to live out our mission, "Love God; Aspire to be your best; Be honest; Forgive; Care," through our curriculum.

At Bishop Ellis Catholic Voluntary Academy, our **intent** is to offer a knowledge-rich curriculum which is broad and balanced and which builds on the knowledge and understanding of all children, whatever their starting points, as they progress through each Key Stage linked to the "Gospel Virtues" of Faith, Hope, Love, Justice, Solidarity, Temperance, Courage and Practical Wisdom and to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

We want to empower children with the knowledge they are entitled to: knowledge that will nourish both them and the society of which they are members of, through providing opportunities throughout the curriculum which will enable children to accumulate cultural capital (the essential knowledge that children need to prepare them for their future success.) The curriculum incorporates the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and other experiences and opportunities which best meet the learning and developmental needs of the pupils in our school. The **intent** of our curriculum is for pupils to have the requisite knowledge to be successful, independent and motivated learners in readiness for their next stage of education. In short, **we want children to remember what we have taught them and know more and remember more**. Through the cohesion of carefully chosen texts, **all** pupils enjoy a curriculum which is rich in language and broad in subject knowledge, providing core skills for academic success. Throughout our curriculum, we place great importance on the emotional well-being of all of our children and staff through a strong focus on PSHE, emotional literacy and mental health.

Commented [HM1]: what does this mean?

We make sure that we **implement** this in a variety of ways relative to the age and development of the children.

The EYFS curriculum covers Reception and is split into seven areas of learning, three prime areas and four specific areas.

Prime:

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED).
2. Physical Development (PD).
3. Communication and Language (CL).

Specific:

5. Literacy. (L)
6. Mathematics. (M)
7. Understanding the world. (UtW)
8. Expressive arts and design. (EAD)

The EYFS curriculum is underpinned by a carefully thought-out balance of a direct teaching model and a play-based approach where children have access to all areas of learning within the classroom and in the outside learning area. Children will engage in self-chosen activities as well as carefully planned adult directed sessions, including phonics and maths. The children are observed and assessed, as they learn and grow, by teachers and other early years professionals so that they progress rapidly towards achieving the 'Early Learning Goals'.

Phonics is a priority at Bishop Ellis. Children develop their phonic knowledge through the "Little Wandle" phonics programme and develop their fluency in reading through the Daily Whole Class Reading Programme. The children are taught phonics where they explore the initial letter sounds and their corresponding letter names. From this, they then learn the sounds that letters make and how to blend sounds together to read simple words.

Through the Reception year and continuing into Year 1, the children will move through the five phases of the phonics programme learning to understand letter patterns as the sounds and words grow in complexity. Alongside this, through years 1-6 sessions of 'Reading for Meaning' take place at least four times a week. This gives pupils the opportunity to not only develop their fluency but also how to infer - reading between the lines - in order to comprehend the meaning behind a character's thoughts and actions in fiction, and understanding information presented in non-fiction.

These sessions also give the children the opportunity to understand how writers select particular words and phrases for purpose in order to create effect. The pupils focus on how the text may relate to themselves, another text they have read or an event in the wider world so that they are immersed in the feelings of the characters they are reading about and are aware of the world around them.

We believe that this vital knowledge will enable our children to be critical thinkers and access texts at a deeper level to empower them to be passionate readers. We encourage our children to take responsibility for reading avidly. All pupils have their own reading record which they are expected to complete daily and a suggested reading list is sent home each year, for each year group, to challenge the children to read widely thus develop their life-long love of literature.

National requirements and school requirements are mapped out as a whole school by subject leaders with support from the Senior Leadership Team. Influenced by the work of Clare Sealy and Mary Myatt, throughout our curriculum, we believe it is crucial that children can make links with prior learning. We do this by making links within a subject (*vertical links*). This means that children will revisit the key concepts of a particular subject and build on them at regular intervals. Alongside this, we develop *horizontal links* between subjects in a year. For example, children learn about rivers in Geography and the importance of the River Nile when learning about the history of Ancient Egypt and the importance of the Nile in Old Testament Scripture. Finally, we map out the *diagonal links*. They are links that join concepts across both year groups and across subjects. For example, the word 'source' is the place where a river begins when studying the River Nile in year 3, but is also the person or book that provides information for a news story or for historical research when we discuss primary and secondary sources in later years. Each time a concept is encountered within a different context, not only is the concept more likely to be remembered, the understanding of that concept becomes more nuanced. Units of study have an overarching key question which forms the basis of the assessment for the unit. Each lesson is then broken down into smaller component questions or parts.

As mentioned, the curriculum is underpinned by the school's mission Love God; Aspire to be your best; Be honest; Forgive; Care and these are taught on their own and through other areas of the curriculum, including assemblies and Celebrations of the Word. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our pupils and their understanding of the core values of our society are woven through the curriculum. We provide opportunities within and beyond the school day for children to participate in a wide range of competitive and non-competitive sporting and physical activities and a variety of creative arts experiences.

The English curriculum and the Mathematics curriculum are supported through a framework developed by staff in school. These subjects are taught in mixed ability groups throughout the school following the mastery approach. In all year groups there are small group interventions in order to support pupils in gaining the key knowledge to become successful readers, writers and mathematicians. Specialist teachers and instructors support high quality Music and Physical Education. All subject leaders are given training and opportunity to keep developing their own subject knowledge, skills and understanding so they can support curriculum development and their colleagues throughout the school. Theme weeks, whole school activities and opportunities within and outside school all enrich and develop the children's learning. After school clubs and events extend these opportunities further. Our locality is considered in planning by building on children's real life experiences. We make use of real life contexts in a variety of subject areas. The outdoor environment and the local community are considered an opportunity for active learning for all our pupils. It is our aim to develop the school grounds so they can enrich different curriculum areas, particularly Science.

The **impact** that the curriculum makes to our children is profound. Our promise to the children is that the curriculum will be a **joyful** experience for all. Pupils have opportunities to share their learning with each other, their parents and carers through school-based and external exhibitions, assemblies, competitions and events involving other schools. Children develop independence and motivation as learners, a desire to strive for academic excellence, along with a sense of responsibility as future citizens. The teachings of Jesus Christ and his Church are at the heart of everything we do at Bishop Ellis.