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Diocese of Northampton

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Dear Parents / Guardians

Curriculum update

Over the past 12 months or so, the school has been devoting a great deal of time and energy towards reviewing and updating our curriculum; our updated documents can now be found, for each subject, on the school website under the curriculum tab.

The teaching staff agreed the following guiding principles about curriculum design:

- It must be guided by the teaching of the Church on Catholic Education
- It must be challenging and ambitious
- All students, of all abilities, must be supported to access the curriculum
- Aims must be understood by all teachers of the subject
- Standards of expected outcomes must be defined and clearly articulated
- The end points for each stage of the curriculum must be clear to teachers and pupils with an explicit statement of what pupils need to know at each 'end point'
- The curriculum can be implemented in the most efficient and effective manner decided upon by the curriculum leaders e.g. in mixed ability groups or setting by ability

At St Thomas More it is our intention to offer a broad and balanced curriculum that builds on the progress achieved at KS2 and prepares students to study a wide range of subjects at GCSE standard in KS4. At KS5 the expectation is that the curriculum offers a broad suite of qualifications to ensure students have a choice of University providers (including Oxbridge), routes to employability and apprenticeships.

St Thomas More School is a Catholic School and therefore the curriculum at its heart houses a reflection of the spiritual and moral dimension to each of our learners. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimension is integral to all of our subjects and is central to the RE curriculum in particular. The mission of the Catholic School cannot ignore the plea of the disadvantaged. Our curriculum therefore seeks to empower all of our learners with opportunities both within and outside the curriculum to excel and to find their place in their community

The curriculum is built around the question: 'What do they need to learn?' This starting point can be applied to the work of a whole department and prompt consideration of units of work in the overall programme of study. It can also be applied to each individual in a class and focus the teacher's attention on what that child needs to learn in order to progress; ensuring that the next steps are planned to build on accurate assessment of where a student is at any point in the planned curriculum.

The development of reading skills is an important element in the whole curriculum and various strategies to improve reading are deployed within subjects and across the school.

Reading ability is assessed using GL Assessment to ensure a clear benchmarking of progress via baseline assessment in Year 7 and on-going assessment at the end of each year.

The curriculum is inclusive and is supported by the expertise of our innovative SEND Department, this firm background of support for the current curriculum paves the way for success at KS4. The curriculum has a focus on challenge in learning as well as building curiosity and thinking skills through the learning questions at the beginning of each lesson. Each subject area enjoys curriculum autonomy. This trust has led to subjects offering bespoke learning strategies which rest on the research of the Learning Scientists. The Curriculum therefore, and Teaching and Learning aspirations, are deeply enmeshed. The curriculum model at STM secures the way for ambition, diversity, challenge and depth.

I hope this gives you a flavour of the work we have done around curriculum, and please look through the departmental curriculum documents on the website for further detail.

As always, I thank you for your continued support.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Bonner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Martin Bonner
Head Teacher