



Archdiocese of
Birmingham

St Thomas More

Catholic Academy

S⁺ Thomas More
Catholic Academy
FAITH | EXCELLENCE | RESPECT

Curriculum Policy

Date of Policy: September 2024

Member of Staff Responsible:

SLT: Mrs E Pycroft
Headteacher: Mr M Rayner

Chair of the Academy Representatives: Mr R Fello
Nominated Academy Representative:

Date of Policy Review: September 2025

Publish: *Internal / website*

Mission Statement

Christ is at the heart of our community, where everyone is known and loved.

In fulfilling our mission, we are a school of prayer. We live as a community of love, peace and reconciliation, valuing everyone's dignity as a child of God to promote and celebrate the growth and achievement of the whole person.

Our intention is to provide an ambitious curriculum for all with inclusion at its heart, so that all our students including our disadvantaged and SEND students can Aspire to be More, achieving their full potential and preparing them to be active and successful adults in modern Britain. Within this, our curriculum is designed to be inclusive, broad and balanced in that it educates not only academically but holistically. All students are provided with the core knowledge and skills that are the foundation of success.

At the heart of our curriculum lies a respect for the subjects we teach and insight into the world each provides. In our Catholic school, the true development of the person, takes precedence over all other things. Aspiration and ambition for all our learners drive the curriculum, including the highest expectations and ambition for all learners, and all staff work relentlessly to remove barriers to learning and intervene where necessary so that all students can succeed.

Our curriculum is sequenced to enable all students to build their knowledge and skills across the different key stages. Appropriate time is planned to ensure students embed key concepts and deepen their understanding within and across curriculum areas. Our extensive SMSC and enrichment programme supports the development of the individual enabling all students to develop employability and life skills.

The curriculum covering Year 7 – 9 is centered on the national curriculum and builds on the work of Primary colleagues, providing pupils with a rich and full curriculum that not only prepares them for KS4 but also gives them the skills and knowledge to make the first decisions about their future career pathways.

KS4 is a two-year programme that offers an ambitious mix of academic, vocational and technical subjects. These have been chosen to suit the needs of all learners. Sufficient time is offered to the core subjects to ensure that students are fully immersed in their important skills. Our ambition is for EBacc to be the foundation of our broad and balanced curriculum. The mix of subjects is designed to maximise the opportunity for students to access aspirational employment opportunities, training and further education.

At KS5, a wide range of subjects are on offer due to our Trinity partnership with fellow Catholic schools. We offer both academic, vocational and technical subjects. We strive to ensure that we provide each student with a study programme that is appropriate and individualised to best suit their aspirations for future study, training or employment. Students are able to follow courses of study aimed at Higher Education (including Russell Group Universities), apprenticeships and employment.

Sixth Form students also access a wide range of opportunities beyond their academic studies. The curriculum aims to educate the whole person, developing confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives. The curriculum provides one hour a week of core RE. A range of enrichment activities. This enables all students to develop employability and life skills and become responsible citizens and leaders who can make a positive contribution to society is offered including EPQ and Career Ready.

All students receive a challenging curriculum where every lesson is 'taught to the top' and scaffolded to support all students to achieve. Our comprehensive Most Able Strategy includes bespoke curriculum and enrichment opportunities such as The Honours Programme, the Scholars Programme, University, stretching and challenging them to reach their goals and aspirations. This Most Able Strategy has equality at its heart, positively including disadvantaged learners to remove barriers to learning and to support them to achieve their potential.

Principles and Beliefs

The Curriculum at St Thomas More Catholic Academy is underpinned by the values and principles outlined in our Academy Mission Statement: As an Academy at the heart of the community we aim to raise the expectations and achievements of all learners; we aim to change for the better the lives and life chances of all members of our community and prepare them for life beyond school. We are committed to the achievement of rapid educational transformation within the college through the development of outstanding practice based through sustainable collaboration.

Provide a broad curriculum prioritising a strong academic core of subjects, such as those offered in the EBacc.

Develop pupils' independent learning skills and resilience, to equip them for further/higher education and employment.

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Legislation and Guidance

This policy reflects the requirements for academies to provide a broad and balanced curriculum as per the Academies Act 2010, and the National Curriculum programmes of study which we have chosen to follow.

It also reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014 and Equality Act 2010, and refers to curriculum related expectations of governing boards set out in the Department for Education's Governance Handbook.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board

The governing board will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation. The governing board will also ensure that:

- A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets
- The school is complying with its funding agreement and teaching a "broad and balanced curriculum" which includes English, maths, science and (subject to providing the right to withdraw) religious education, and enough teaching time is provided for pupils to cover the requirements of the funding agreement
- Proper provision is made for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs (SEN)
- All courses provided for pupils below the age of 19 that lead to qualifications, such as GCSEs and A-levels, are approved by the secretary of state
- The school implements the relevant statutory assessment arrangements
- It participates actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum
- Pupils from year 8 onwards are provided with independent, impartial careers guidance, and that this is appropriately resourced

Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that:

- All required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met
- The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the governing board
- They manage requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects, where appropriate
- The school's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements
- The governing board is fully involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum
- The governing board is advised on whole-school targets in order to make informed decisions
- Proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with SEN

It is the responsibility of the Heads of Department (HoDs) to:

- Ensure every opportunity is taken to support, contribute to and enhance the Catholic life.
- Know what is the best that has been thought and said within their specific subject area(s) and ensure they and all members of their department keep up to date with subject knowledge. Have knowledge of the next steps available to students making clear CIAG links which are mapped out in Schemes of Learning.
- Have a clear rationale for their curriculum content.

- Keep abreast of changes/curriculum developments in their subject area, how these could impact on the curriculum and implement these where appropriate in discussion with SLT line managers.
- Design and implement a sequential knowledge-based curriculum that ensures student progression within the subject and meets the principles set out in this policy.
- Monitor the impact of the curriculum on standards of student learning and progress.
- Regularly review and adapt the curriculum in response to monitoring, evaluation and review schedules.
- Support the devising of the timetable within their subject.
- Lead high quality 'Prepare to Teach' workshops to gain consistency in implementation of the curriculum and to develop subject specific pedagogy within their team.
- Work collaboratively with colleagues across the All Saints Catholic Collegiate to develop an "all-through" curriculum for their subject area(s).

It is the responsibility of all Teachers to:

- Know their students through detailed Learner Profiles enabling them to adapt curriculum planning and pedagogy accordingly.
- Ensure all students are guided to be the very best version of themselves that they can be through planning and delivering knowledge – rich lessons.
- Deliver the curriculum in line with the academy's teaching and learning policy and their subject area's schemes of learning.
- Take responsibility for keeping their own subject knowledge up to date.
- Make effective adaptations and personalise the curriculum to allow all students to access the required content.
- Actively engage with their own continued professional development

Organisation and Planning

All of our students are given the opportunity to reach their full potential through the provision of an ambitious and rich curriculum delivered within a caring and supportive environment. CPD for all staff ensures sustainability and supports the creation of a culture of continued improvement where students strive to achieve at the highest level; where they 'aspire to be more'.

Religious Education is allocated 10% of curriculum time at every key stage in line with the Bishop's Conference Directive.

At Key Stage 3 All students study Art and Design, English Language, English Literature,

Geography, History, Computing, French, German, Maths, Music, Physical Education (including Dance), Religious Education, Science, Technology (Food & Nutrition, Product Design, Graphic Design and Textiles) and RSE/PSHE.

In the majority of subject areas, students are placed in mixed ability classes. Levels of attainment provided by the primary schools and our own early baseline assessment data allows us to place students in regularly reviewed appropriate groups and for teaching and learning to be tailored to the needs of individuals from the beginning of Year 7.

The options process in Year 9 allows students to personalise their experience by making informed choices about the subjects they wish to study during Year 10 and 11. All students in Years 10 and 11 study English Language and Literature, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education at GCSE, together with a core entitlement to Physical Education and RSE/PSHE. We encourage and support our students in achieving excellent GCSE grades in subjects that will allow them to achieve their full future potential and qualify for the English Baccalaureate, where appropriate.

At Key Stage 4 Students also opt to follow courses that match their abilities, interests, skills and aspirations: Art & Design, Business Studies, Child Care, Computing, Music, Creative iMedia, Food & Nutrition, French, German, Geography, Health and Social Care, History, Photography, Sports Studies, Product Design and ASDAN / Princes Trust.

Vocational Education

There are some school based optional courses that have a strong vocational focus at KS4 and KS5, including BTECs, ASDAN / Princes Trust, NCFE qualifications, NQF qualifications and OCR National and Technical qualifications.

Curriculum Structure: Two-week timetable (50 hours)

Key Stage 3													
Year	RE	English	Maths	Science	Geography	History	French	PE	Design & Technology	Art	Music	I.T	PSHE
7 & 8	5	8	8	6	3	3	3	4	3	2	2	2	1
Year	RE	English	Maths	Science	Geography	History	French & German	PE	Design & Technology	Art	Music	I.T	PSHE
9	5	8	8	6	3	3	3	4	3	2	2	2	1
Key Stage 4													
Year	RE	English	Maths	Science	Option A	Option B	Option C	PE					
10 & 11	5	10	9	9	5	5	5	2					

AIM Offer 2024-2025

We are committed to providing a bespoke curriculum offer for our students, so where the need arises to ensure we keep the highest standards of attendance and attitudes to learning, we provide opportunities to work with local post-16 providers.

For 2024-2025, we have created smaller teaching groups across the Y band population to support some of our vulnerable students where there is risk of them not achieving the Basics qualifications. The provision will have direct impact for these vulnerable students who will continue to study the full curriculum as well as accessing the level of challenge required for the individual's ability, ensuring every child can 'aspire to be more'.

In doing this we have created small group study periods and opportunities to study an intensive reading programme to assist our students in accessing the external summer 2025 examinations.

In creating this opportunity, we have worked with local colleges to provide a range of fully funded courses on a Friday. Examples include:

- Health and Social Care
- Public Services
- Hair and Beauty
- Gaming

At Key Stage 5 the sixth form curriculum is planned and agreed by the Curriculum Managers and the Principals of the schools/academies who, together, form the Trinity Sixth Form. The chair of the Trinity Sixth Form's Curriculum Managers' group co-ordinates regular meetings and chairs the decision-making process to ensure that the post-16 courses and the enrichment opportunities on offer provide a broad and balanced curriculum that allows for progression to Higher Education. A mix of academic and vocational subjects and qualifications are on offer across the three centres and are identified below:

Trinity Sixth Form		
Subjects		Enrichment activities
A Level	Vocational	
Art	Applied Science	Arts Award
Biology	Business Studies	Career Ready
Business Studies	Digital Media	Core Maths
Chemistry	Health and Social Care	English Speaking Board
Computer Studies	Law	Extended Project
Classics	DC Soccer School	Faith in Action
English Language	Sport	GCSE Resit
English Literature		PSHE
Further Mathematics		Sports
Geography		Young Enterprise

Government and Politics		
History		
Mathematics		
Music		
Philosophy and Ethics		
Physics		
Product Design		
Psychology		
Sociology		

There is a specific entry requirement to join the Trinity Sixth Form of students achieving a Grade 4 or above at GCSE level in five or more subjects (including English and Maths). There are also subject specific requirements for certain courses.

Option blocks are created from student preferred subject choices to facilitate the maximum number of students' subject choices/combinations. Where a student's choice(s) cannot be accommodated, reserve choices will be considered after discussion with the student. Where class sizes are too small to make a course viable, a course will not run and alternative subject choice(s) will need to be made.

As a Catholic Sixth Form, all students complete Core RE in year 12 and year 13. Students may elect to study for the Extended Project Qualification and Core Maths alongside their subjects to broaden their curriculum.

The broad range of enrichment opportunities throughout Years 12 and 13 enhance students' learning, develop their independence as young adults and prepare them for life beyond the academy and at university, in training or employment.

Further information regarding the post-16 curriculum and the sixth form in general can be found on our website, in the Trinity Sixth Form prospectus and from each of the individual partner schools/academies.

Key Stage 3 & 4 Class sizes

When building timetable blocks and creating classes we aim to maintain an average number below thirty students in each class, although this number can vary and is significantly less in some areas.

In practical subjects, the size of the room and availability of resources will determine the maximum class size. All relevant national recommendations for maximum safe class sizes are adhered to.

Key Stage 3 & 4 Setting

Where students are taught in sets, subject and senior leaders believe it is advantageous to the learning of students. In other curriculum areas, students are taught in mixed ability sets.

Adapted Curriculum and Alternative Provision

Alternative Provision is educational provision for students who are not accessing mainstream and/or adapted curriculum offers including AIM, education for a variety of reasons.

These are the main reasons for choosing Alternative Provision:

- To support students with complex Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (SEND)
- To fulfil Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) provisions.
- To support students with medical difficulties (including mental health) to access education.
- To provide provision which reduces the risk of a student being permanently excluded from school, and where AIM is not appropriate.
- Reintegrating a student back into mainstream school following a period of sustained absence.

The use of alternative provision will only be considered if it is in the best interests of the student, or in order to enhance our offer of education for that individual. Any agreement will be monitored and reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that this continues to be the case once the placement has started.

The final decision to refer a student for alternative provision is at the discretion of the Headteacher after consulting relevant colleagues, professionals, parents/carers and the student for the views. The following will also be considered:

- Whether the provision meets the student's needs.
- The quality and safety of the provision.
- Costs and value for money.

Full time education is generally accepted to be 25 hours a week. All young people must receive full time provision in total whether in one setting or more, unless a young person's medical condition or social circumstances make full time education inappropriate.

Alternative Providers

Alternative provision could take the form of part time/full time or a combination of provision alternative with a variety of providers.

St Thomas More Catholic Academy uses a range of providers of alternative education in Stoke-on-Trent and surrounding areas. These providers offer a range of courses from trade subjects (mechanics, construction, hairdressing, etc.) to specialist areas (business, catering, childcare, fashion, music, drama, and art) to therapeutic interventions to GCSE or key skills classes.

Alternative Provision for Students with EHCPs is very carefully considered. SEND LA is informed as part of an annual review, emergency or interim review. Quality provision is sourced to address specific needs. These are related to relevant broader areas of need, with outcomes related to progress against EHCP outcomes.

Quality-Assurance

In order to ensure the quality of the alternative provision, the following arrangements are in place:

- A full record of placement details is held centrally
- The Attendance Officer will track and record attendance for each student daily
- The DDSL will maintain regular contact with the placement, including making regular visits
- Regular contact with the student/parent/carer will be maintained
- Progress reports will be completed and shared by the provider
- Close collaboration with other relevant agencies will be maintained

Safeguarding

The provider will:

- Provide the relevant safeguarding documentation, including DBS information and CP/Safeguarding training details and documentation
- Inform school when a young person does not attend the provision.
- Follow their safeguarding procedures but also inform St Thomas More Catholic Academy of any concerns, directly to the DSL/DDSL.
- Inform parents/carers and STMCA of any first aid treatment.

The School will:

- Send an appropriate member of staff to the provision ahead of the student attending.
- Complete all relevant checks.
- Share information that is in the student's best interest to share, around their needs (including medical conditions and individual healthcare plans if in place) and strategies to support them to achieve.
- Record and track the use of alternative providers using our Single Central Record.

Attendance

Tracking attendance at alternative providers will be completed daily by the Attendance Officer for St Thomas More Catholic Academy. Student absence will be recorded within sims, and any continued/patterns/unexplained/unauthorised absence will be dealt with in accordance with the Attendance Policy for St Thomas More Catholic Academy. This may include action, where relevant, by the Education Welfare Officer.

Adapted Curriculum / Part Time Timetables

St Thomas More is committed to developing and maintaining an effective whole school strategy with regards to attendance and punctuality. The DfE Working Together to Improve Attendance 2022 guidelines state that attendance "is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment."

"At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 41. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%)"

"For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent)³ and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study)"

St Thomas More is committed to supporting the excellent attendance of all pupils.

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable will only ever be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any part time timetable agreement will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. At the point of the implementation of a part-time timetable, an Adapted Curriculum Agreement will be completed between school, parents and the pupil, and will be regularly reviewed throughout. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore will record absence as authorised.

PSHE and Relationships Sex Education

The implementation of a curriculum beyond the academic or vocational significantly enhances the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and effectively prepares them for life in modern Britain with a robust understanding of the Fundamental British Values.

Students in all year groups have a form period per week dedicated to PSHE. This is delivered by form tutors and gives students the opportunity to learn life skills beyond the regular curriculum. This 'morning mission' programme focusses on a range of subjects (listed on our website) and considers the voice of the student body regarding topics they have asked for more information on.

Students in Year 7, 8 and 9 have a timetabled lesson of PSHE once a fortnight with a subject specialist teacher and also have the opportunity to voice any concerns regarding the topics in the lessons to the PSHE Lead.

Our PSHE education ensures that all of our students receive information which helps them to stay safe and aims to develop skills and attributes such as resilience, self-esteem, risk management, teamworking and critical thinking in the context of learning grouped into three core themes: health and wellbeing, relationships and living in the wider world (including economic wellbeing and aspects of careers education). RSHE is delivered through PSHE in KS3 and through PSHE weeks in KS4 and 5. The provision for RSHE meets both statutory and diocesan requirements.

Disapplication of the National Curriculum

Parents can withdraw their children from sex education, apart from the aspects covered by the science curriculum, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. They cannot withdraw their children from relationships or health education.

A parent can also request that their child is wholly or partly excused from:

- Receiving RE given in the school in accordance with the school's basic curriculum
- Attendance at religious worship in the school

Requests must be made in writing to the Headteacher. The school must grant such requests but we believe these are vital aspects of the STMCA curriculum.

For all other subjects **parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw their child.** Requests must be made in writing to the Headteacher who will make the final decision. Governors are clear that all students should follow the National Curriculum.

Requests received by the Headteacher will be considered and an investigation into the reasons for withdrawal will be carried out. Reasons against the withdrawal including the negative impact of "dropping" a subject will also be presented. At KS4 students may "drop" or have a different timetable but this is agreed with the Headteacher via SLT.

We can dis-apply the National Curriculum for individual pupils at KS3 where they have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or we believe that a pupil needs to be assessed with a view to making or amending an EHC plan. This will take place on an individual child basis dependent on need.

Spiritual, moral, social, vocational and cultural development including British Values

The curriculum is extensive and includes personal development education relating to topics such as harmful sexual behaviours, gang youth violence, knife crime, radicalisation and extremism, mental health, healthy living, social media, future aspirations, CSE and grooming, county lines, CCE, drugs and alcohol, and bullying.

Through our delivery of SMSVC we:

- include in suitable parts of the curriculum, as appropriate for the age of pupils, material on the strengths, advantages and disadvantages of democracy, and how democracy and the law work in Britain, in contrast to other forms of government in other countries;
- ensure that all pupils within the school have a voice that is listened to, and demonstrate how democracy works by actively promoting democratic processes such as a school council whose members are voted for by the pupils;
- use opportunities such as general or local elections to hold mock elections to promote fundamental British values and provide pupils with the opportunity to learn how to argue and defend points of view;
- use teaching resources from a wide variety of sources to help pupils understand a range of faiths, and
- consider the role of extra-curricular activity, including any run directly by pupils, in promoting Fundamental British values.

Careers Information, Advice and Guidance

Impartial CIAG is embedded throughout the school curriculum and supported with established links with many companies and external providers. Students selecting their optional courses ready for teaching from Year 10 are provided with course details via the “options booklet” which is distributed at the start of the options process in Year 9. An options CIAG assembly, a parent information evening and individual student interviews also form part of the process. Responsibility for providing additional advice lies with Year 9 tutors, the Head of Year 9, the CIAG team and the senior leaders in charge of Year 9, CIAG and the curriculum.

Inclusion

Teachers set high expectations for all pupils. They will use appropriate assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils with high prior attainment
- Pupils with low prior attainment
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)

Teachers will plan lessons so that pupils with SEN and/or disabilities can study every National Curriculum subject, wherever possible, and ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving.

Teachers will also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help pupils to develop their English, and to support pupils to take part in all subjects.

Further information can be found in our statement of equality information and objectives, and in our SEN policy and information report.

Monitoring Arrangements

Governors monitor whether the school is complying with its funding agreement and teaching a “broad and balanced curriculum” which includes the required subjects, through: school visits, external reviews, LAR meetings and sub-committees.

Heads of department monitor the way their subject is taught throughout the school through the MER schedule

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Assessment and Feedback Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- SEN policy and information report
- Equality information and objectives
- Alternative Provision and Adapted Curriculum Policy