

St. Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy



Recovery Curriculum Statement July 2020

Our Mission Statement:

Christ is at the centre of St. Mary's as we strive to nurture and care for all people by encouraging them to **Believe, Succeed** and **Soar** within God's love to achieve the very best that they can.

Success

Trust

Motivation

Aspiration

Resilience

You

Shine

We aim to create a caring community and environment, setting out to meet the needs of the children, and to encourage them to care for others, through understanding and respect, by creating a sound atmosphere in which the children feel happy and secure, and establishing links with parents and the wider community.

Children are expected to do their best at all times and to take pride in the work that they produce. Good manners and good behaviour are also expected in school, and the children are taught to care and be proud to be a member of the St. Mary's Academy family. The school aims to work towards all children experiencing a measure of real success and progress in areas of activity and learning. We provide a wide range of experiences in order to stimulate the children's interest and imagination and fully extend the pupils in all abilities, to ensure they reach their maximum potential.

Our curriculum is underpinned with our Gospel Values of:

Love, Faith, Hope, Peace, Mercy, Community

And all members of our school community are encouraged to live out these values.

The **General Principles** of our curriculum are that children:

- Meet Jesus through all aspects of their work.
- Experience the challenge and enjoyment of learning.
- Learn within a coherent and progressive framework.
- See clear links between different aspects of their learning.
- Understand the purpose and value of their learning and see its relevance to their past, present and future.
- Explore the breadth and depth of the national curriculum.

Introduction:

The last few months have been very strange indeed for educational settings, due to the lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. As schools look to returning to full attendance in September this year, they are considering how this return should happen and how it will look in their school.

We at St. Mary's are no different and have been considering for some time what changes or adaptations will be needed in September to facilitate the learning of our children, who most of whom will not have been in formal education for a period of six months.

There are two main approaches being taken by schools:

1. The 'catch-up' academic approach. This focuses on the core subjects of English and Maths, with most foundation subjects being shelved until the required amount of academic catch-up is achieved.
2. The Recovery Curriculum approach. This is a nurturing approach, which acknowledges the losses experienced by the children due to the pandemic and works to rebuild the relationships between the children and schools and heals through responsiveness and care.

In order to decide which approach suits the school best, experts suggest that we examine our school's aims and mission statement and work to truly 'live-out' their message.

Our Approach:

As a Christian community, we have decided that the 'Recovery Curriculum' approach is the one we want to employ within our school; it complements our daily practice as a caring, compassionate 'family' in Christ.

The Recovery Curriculum:

The Recovery Curriculum (RC) is an evidence-based construct, not a set curriculum. It acknowledges the 5 losses experienced by children through the lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. These are:

- Loss of routine
- Loss of structure
- Loss of friendship
- Loss of opportunity
- Loss of freedom

As well as these, many children will have indirectly experienced the further loss of financial stability, which has been experienced first-hand by their parents/carers.

Many parents/carers, both in our school community and nationwide, have reported their children suffering from sleep disturbances. This is a sub-category of the loss of routine. Further symptoms may include:

- Panic attacks
- Easily alarmed; jumpy
- Quiet; withdrawn
- Feeling alone
- Feeling uncertain; don't know what's next

Furthermore, friendships are not experienced in the same way digitally and this loss may have triggered a bereavement response in the child, manifesting itself as, for example, angst or a need to mourn the loss of face-to-face interaction.

Many children have lost a rite of passage, for example, Y6 children leaving primary school and all the celebrations and reflections that are integral to this process.

Young carers will have experienced additional pressure and learning may have become inconsequential to caring.

We are to assume, therefore, that ALL children are vulnerable, with fragile mental health, until we have evidence to the contrary for each individual child.

The 5 losses generate 4 consequences:

- Bereavement
- Attachment
- Anxiety
- Trauma

Bereavement:

This may go on for some time. There is no set time for recovery – it is an individual response.

Attachment:

There have been disturbances to attachment in lockdown. Secure attachment is required for positive mental health so if attachment issues are not addressed and dealt with appropriately and in a timely manner, longer term problems for the child will result.

Anxiety:

This blocks learning; the physical response of cortisol on the brain is that there is no brain imprint of learning. A 'quiet' child may look like they are learning but may simply be 'holding it together', whilst no learning is taking place. Furthermore, anxiety will increase if expectation is based on academic outcomes alone.

Trauma:

For some children, being at home under lockdown with have been extremely traumatic.

These consequences translate to the child, thus the child is thinking:

- Is school going to be transitory now? It was always a constant previously, like it or loathe it.
- Can I trust the teacher not to abandon me again? (The child cannot differentiate between purposeful and non-purposeful abandonment)
- We were walking together down the same path then the virus sent us in different directions. Can we reconnect?

- Can our relationship be re-established?

The RC:

- Is built through compassionate leadership
- Reflects the aims and values of the school
- Applies best informed judgement – it will look different for every school and setting
- Personalised
- Is responsive – applies a ‘let’s deal with it’ approach to what the children say
- Is rooted in the lived experience of the child, NOT what the National Curriculum says comes next

There are 5 levers (or strategies) to aid recovery in the RC:

- Relationships
- Community
- Metacognition
- Transparent curriculum
- Space

Relationships:

Relationships need to be re-established and built upon with:

- Friends
- Peers/class-mates/year group/other children across the school
- Teachers
- Other adults

Community:

Stories from the community need to be told, shared, fact-checked, understood and given perspective. Staff need to listen to the needs of the community and respond to these.

Metacognition:

Children will have experienced the loss of definition as a learner. They need to re-learn ‘how to learn’ in a kind and caring way, which ignites their engagement and rebuilds stamina for learning. Children to consider what they have learned about themselves as learners.

Transparent curriculum:

Co-construct the curriculum with the children, particularly initially, through this recovery period. If their questions and mis-conceptions go unexplored, they will become ‘baggage’ to that child. Children will want to know the answer to, ‘Are we going to be okay?’ Make it clear what they are learning; acknowledge the learning they have done at home; use elements of what’s already in place.

Space:

The children need space and time to play, to get used to being together again, to regain the enjoyment of being together. Some children will return to school very cautious about being part of a large group and being without their known adult/s.

There are 3 phases of recovery:

1. The holistic phase. This is the start of recovery for all.
2. The focused recovery phase. This phase recognises that some children will have already recovered so focuses on those whose needs continue. This may involve small group or 1:1 work and is personalised and needs-led.
3. Deep recovery. This enables a longer period of exploration of the trauma. It allows the child to re-calibrate as a learner and requires teacher intuition to be sensitive to the changing needs of the children.

It is impossible to put a set timescale on this journey of recovery. However, as a starting point ONLY, St. Mary's have in mind the following:

Advent 1 2020: Begin the RC with the holistic phase

Mid-Advent 1: Begin gathering academic baselines

End of Advent 1: Review progress. We anticipate that some children will have recovered by this point

Advent 2: Continue RC at focused recovery phase

End of Advent 2: Review progress

Lent 1: Continue RC at both focused and deep recovery phases

Review termly, continuing with the RC at the deep phase for the remainder of the academic year, plus the focused phase, as required

Advent 1 2021: Return to 'normal'

The impact of the RC will be considered at each review point. However, the end point is not the end of an academic year – rather, it is at the end of that person's life. The impact of the pandemic and subsequent recovery will be life-long.

THIS TIMETABLE IS TOTALLY SUBJECT TO CHANGE DEPENDING ON THE NEEDS OF OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

In summary,

- The RC is an unwritten relationship curriculum
- The starting point is NOT academic
- Children have experienced a period of neglect, albeit non-willful
- A humane, relationship-based approach is required which re-establishes trust and promotes resilience
- We have to accept that the children may return to school and no longer see it as the 'safe' place it always was. We need to reframe new perceptions.
- We need to accept that we will not know all the answers on Day 1

- Children will need kindness
- Creativity, care and compassion are needed on a scale never seen before.
- Mental Health = Mental Wealth!

What this will look like in our school:

The curriculum we deliver throughout the RC phases will be based on our whole school curriculum, developed from Jan – June 2020, using a variety of tools including Curriculum Maestro and White Rose Maths. In addition, we will incorporate the ‘NHS 5 Ways to Wellbeing’ guidance which advocates that we all:

- Move
- Connect
- Give
- Take notice/Pause
- Learn/Grow

This guidance compliments and interweaves with the structure of the RC already described.

RE will be at the heart of our curriculum, as it has always been, and PSHE will take greater prominence to support recovery. Foundation subjects will continue to be taught to provide the children with a broad-ranging, exciting curriculum, although thought will be given as to how the objectives will be taught, to ensure that they are delivered in a way compatible with the ethos of the RC.

The job of the adults will be to stimulate interest and desire to be in school and re-ignite the child’s intrinsic motivation to learn. To do this, they will need lots of ‘WOW’, memorable experiences and immersive experiences interspersed carefully with ‘back-to-basics’ tasks to gradually transition the children back into their role as active and engaged learners. Indeed, some children have never been engaged previously, so for them this is a unique second chance.

To begin the school year (week 1, Thursday 3rd & Friday 4th September 2020) children will be in their new classrooms, but with their ‘old’ teacher. This will give the children a sense of closure which most missed because they were not in school. The new teacher will meet the children for an hour on the Friday afternoon before the day is concluded with their ‘old’ teacher.

From the following Monday (7th September 2020) the class is that of solely the new teacher.

From the first day children are in school they will become used to the routine of “classroom chat” at the beginning of the day, this will encourage children to share how they feel. Then at the end of the day will be “reflection time” which involves sharing how the children feel and putting something in the thought/sharing box. This will encourage children not to go home with a “worry” because they have shared it.

Children will be able to assess their feelings regularly and these self-assessments will be monitored by the adults and compared to teacher assessments of the child’s emotional state. These assessments are derived from the Leuven Scale of Wellbeing, usually used in EYFS.

Children in Y1 – Y6 will be provided with a journal and they will be encouraged to record their thoughts and feelings in it. The younger children will be able to draw their feelings, although some

of the older children may choose to record their feelings in this way too. Prompts will be added to the inside front cover to support the children in being able to record their feelings.

Also during the first full two weeks, children will write the class prayer, have new behavior expectations explained and together develop a nurturing approach. Also to reconnect to the school and community by creating activities that are meaning and purposeful but not necessarily academically based. Adults will help the children to develop the Liturgical year display, the candle display and the growth display.

Each class will have a confidential 'thought/sharing box' and may make 'happiness boxes' with the children too.

Initially, teachers will need to provide the time and space for: stories to be told and listened to; children to play, interact and reconnect; facts to be clarified and myths dispelled; relationships to be re-established and trust to begin to build; social time - children to enjoy being with each other again.

Outside learning and activities will be a feature of the learning, especially the use of our forest school area.

A great emphasis will be on reading and the sharing of books with children. Discussion about what has been read will form an important strand of this reading work.

No homework other than reading will be set in Advent 1.

From day 1, teachers will have already begun the process of assessing where the gaps are in the children's knowledge. However, following the initial settling of the holistic phase, they will begin the process of gathering baselines to check and provide the evidence of these gaps. This may look different for each class, from a few days to a few weeks, depending on the specific needs of the children in each class. Fluidity and flexibility are key to this process.

Progress, experiences and good practice will be shared at the weekly teacher meetings and then reviewed at the end of Advent 1. At this stage, a plan of action will be agreed for Advent 2, based on the progress made at that stage.

This is an opportunity like never before to live out the mission statement and values of the school.

See Appendix One:

For the COVID Catch-up Funding at St. Mary's Grantham.

Sources:

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<https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/supporting-your-pupils-through-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

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<https://www.thenational.academy/2020-21-oak-curriculum>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources>

www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk/coping-with-coronavirus and other titles (for all ages)

www.nurtureuk.org The bereavement box

<https://emotionallyhealthyschools.org/primary/the-leuven-scale/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

Appendix One

COVID Response and Catch up Funding

Following the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent closure of schools, the government issued an amount of catch-up funding to all schools to support with closing gaps in learning. The amount of funding allocated is based on pupil numbers.

At St. Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, we have also used the government recommended, 'COVID-19 Support Guide for Schools' published by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to identify the best strategies, based on long term research, that will enable us to achieve the most positive outcomes.

Covid Catch-up Funding for GSM

Advent Term 2020
Grantham St. Mary's (GSM) = around £4200
Money to be spent on a Covid Catch-up Teacher for 3 days from 5 th October – 11 th December 2020. Also extra maths resources to be purchased (approximately £400)

Lent Term 2021
Grantham St. Mary's (GSM) = around £6300
Money to be spent on a Covid Catch-up Teacher.

Pentecost Term 2021
Grantham St. Mary's (GSM) = around £6300
Money to be spent on a Covid Catch-up Teacher.