



Thursday 13th May 2021 - Community Assembly

Ambitious foundations



During one of my Philosophy lessons with Year 7 students last week, we were discussing the small matter of how we know that we exist. As is always the way with these remarkable students, there were plenty of ideas. One student noted that her ability to think played a part in her realisation that she existed, echoing Descartes' seventeenth-century declaration: cogito ergo sum (I think, therefore I am). This profound moment, with a class full of 11-12-year olds was a welcome reminder of the intellectual verve of our students and the importance of their Key Stage 3 (Yrs 7-9) years.

I thought it would be helpful to remind members of our school community that we best serve our students by ensuring that these formative secondary years are distinguished by establishing ambitious foundations, to then drive and direct their GCSE and A level choices and experiences. I share here key features of our KS3 Curriculum, which furnish these ambitious foundations.

Curriculum Vision & Aims

The vital concept which animates the CCHS curriculum is ambition. This is clearly communicated through our School vision - developing the leaders of tomorrow - and our curriculum aims:

- the pursuit of excellence
- fulfilling individual potential
- contributing to the local and global community.

Curriculum Challenge

To realise our vision and aims requires institutionalised curriculum challenge, i.e. demanding and stimulating experiences across the School. Our challenge model has seven elements:

- Scheduled: habitual challenge, e.g. daily lesson activities
- Extension: amplified challenge, e.g. Curriculum Support Booklet activities
- Enrichment: deep challenge, e.g. Enrichment Day activities
- Overarching: cohesive challenge, e.g. Internationalism activities
- Excellence: examination challenge, e.g. GCSE and A level
- Ancillary: complementary challenge, e.g. extra-curricular activities
- Innovation: novel challenge, e.g. special projects

Curriculum Architecture

CCHS teachers created our Key Stage 3 curriculum, for Years 7-9 students, using the following four key elements to frame their work:

Content – core subject knowledge to foster disciplinary understanding. As a grammar school, specialist subject knowledge and rigour must be preserved and be our primary concern. This is clearly demonstrated by the breadth of specialist subjects that we offer.

Concepts – subject specific, as well as broad, open concepts, to encourage deep thinking. We are animated by an understanding of the importance of conceptual learning, within the framework of specialist subject knowledge acquisition. Allying core subject knowledge with a host of concepts creates opportunities for rich and challenging enquiry-focused learning.

Connections – cross-subject links to create interdisciplinary thinking. We work to exploit links between subjects to enrich both the learning experiences of students and the professional development of teachers. We think interdisciplinary learning is important in a modern education system.

Competencies – attribute/skill development to produce well-rounded and versatile learners. We developed our CCHS Learner Profile and aim to ensure that these and other competencies are brought forward and revealed at appropriate moments to fully capitalise on all learning opportunities.

Learner Profile

As noted above in relation to Competencies, our Learner Profile provides us with the language and ideas to envisage learning in its broadest sense:

Articulate – polished communicator

Creative – novel thinker

Enquiring – sharp questioner

Knowledgeable – information seeker

Principled – conscientious learner

Reflective – agile learner

Resilient – courageous character

Scholarly School

Ultimately, we aim to be a scholarly school. We endorse the wisdom of Rene Descartes' words - *"It is not enough to have a good mind; the main thing is to use it well."*

School - an institution which promotes and believes in the transformative power of knowledge and understanding; a thinking and intellectually adventurous institution.

Leadership - consistently articulating a coherent vision of the purpose of learning to all stakeholders.

Students - interested, reflective and knowledgeable lifelong learners, with the time and inclination to think.

Staff - interested, reflective and knowledgeable lifelong learners. Reading widely and thinking laterally, with an interest in the subject specialisms of colleagues.

Governors and Parents - valuing excellence in all senses and understanding the need for reflection, knowledge and wisdom.

Mr Lawlor