St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School

Teaching & Learning Policy

September 2026

OUR APPROACH

At St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School, our Teaching and Learning approach is founded upon proven, evidence-based research findings. It is rooted in clear pedagogical principles and works alongside our creative, carefully constructed and deliberately sequenced curriculum to provide our pupils with outstanding opportunities for learning.

Through regular, relevant and robust Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) for all adults at St Francis, teachers and support staff alike are provided with opportunities to reflect upon their current practice, to explore excellent models of expertise found elsewhere and to refine their approach. Observing one another teach, sharing ideas and resources, a supportive coaching programme and a willingness to take part in continuous professional dialogue around teaching and learning methods all ensure that teaching and learning at St Francis is placed at the heart of what we do.

'Every teacher needs to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better'. (Professor Dylan Wiliam)

Our Teaching and Learning philosophy is underpinned by our School Driver words and our three School Values which enable us to keep in mind the 'Big Picture' – the 'intent' behind our approach.

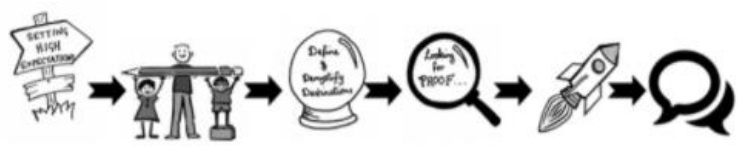
Driver Words:



School Values:



Also at the root of our philosophy is our **'Teaching Backwards'** approach which is explained further within this policy.



Our Teaching and Learning Policy at St Francis also corresponds to the SJB MAT Teaching and Learning Model, the structure of which informs this policy:

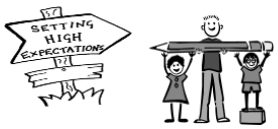


ENGAGE

Our MAT Model

'Teachers know their pupils well and engage them in building supportive, inclusive and stimulating learning environments. Teachers motivate and empower students to manage their own learning and develop autonomy. Pupils reflect on what they know, begin to make connections between prior and new learning and organise thinking towards a big question.'

What This Looks Like At St Francis:



Starting Points: We believe that by engaging pupils effectively with high quality learning experiences we can improve their motivation which in turn will increase achievement. New topics always begin with a 'hook' or big question designed to engage pupils with the upcoming learning.

In line with our school 'Teaching Backwards Approach', teachers establish pupils' individual starting points at the beginning of a sequence of work; this recognises that pupils come to new learning with differing levels of prior knowledge and understanding, and that therefore teachers need to know where to scaffold or extend teaching objectives. Starting points are identified through pre-learning tasks such as discussions, challenges, mind-maps or through careful questioning. 'Well planned pre-learning tasks should help to bring out what learners already know; what misconceptions they may have and what interests them' (SJB MAT Teaching and Learning Policy).

Once starting points have been established, teachers are then able to plan the learning activities which will best facilitate the learning intentions. Lessons are designed to be well-paced and purposeful, maximizing learning opportunities and minimalizing 'dead-time' – for example, the transition time between lessons. Teachers use a wide range of models and resources effectively, along with clear success criteria, so that pupils stay engaged with their learning. Pupils have a clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve and the steps they need to take in order to get there. They are encouraged to evaluate their own learning, suggest improvements and identify their own next steps.

In order to maintain engagement in learning, teachers adapt their teaching to respond to individual, group or class needs. They may use flexible groupings, 'scaffolded' tasks, worked examples, additional practice time, adapted explicit instructions or teaching assistant support.

The classroom environment is a key factor in engaging pupils with the teaching and learning process. It should be inviting and well-organised, with carefully chosen and well-kept resources easily available to anyone who needs to independently access them. Displays are relevant and informative; either being an opportunity to showcase excellent examples of work, a revision of previous work or as an aid to ongoing work – for example, a 'Working Wall'. Wherever possible, displays are interactive so as to promote engagement, with prominently displayed vocabulary, labels and/or questions. Pupils are expected to help contribute to, help maintain and take pride in their learning environment.

We believe that engagement with parents and carers is a key component to successful learning. Teachers share their planning on the school's website, by sending home Knowledge Organisers (see Appendix) and termly curriculum overviews and by inviting parents and carers into the classroom on a regular basis to take part in the pupils' learning experience. Wherever possible, we ask parents to share their personal skills and areas of expertise to reinforce or enhance the curriculum.

EXPLAIN

Our MAT Model

'Teachers explicitly introduce and teach relevant knowledge, concepts and skills in multiple ways to connect new and existing knowledge. They challenge misconceptions and prepare pupils to navigate their own learning. Pupils know what excellence looks like and how to achieve it, as well as the mistakes to avoid'.

What This Looks Like At St Francis:



Defining & Demystifying the Destination: Teachers will always introduce new learning by explaining where it fits in with what pupils already know. They will explain why and how pupils will be learning new content, and share what the intended end outcome should look like.

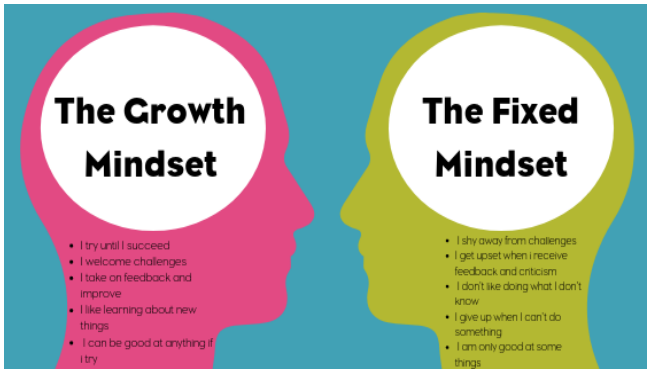
Explanations will be carefully pitched to the age of pupils; all teachers aim to provide 'concise, appropriate, engaging explanations that are just right – neither too short nor too long; neither too complex nor too simple'. (Great Teaching Toolkit Evidence Review - *Evidence Based Education June 2020*)

Teachers explain new learning using a wide variety of teaching techniques and carefully sourced resources. They use a scaffold 'I do, we do, you do' approach, 'dual coding' (where images work alongside words or numbers to aid learning) and practical demonstrations where appropriate. Pupils are also encouraged to explain their learning to each other to aid consolidation.

Explanations will be backed up by clear models – both WAGOLLS (What A Good One Looks Like) and WABOLLS (What A Bad One Looks Like) so that pupils have opportunities to explore features that make up examples. Teachers will also 'talk through' their thoughts and actions as they model examples, so that pupils have a clear understanding of the thinking behind practising new learning.

As part of the explanation process, teachers will explicitly share success criteria with pupils so that they are clear about what needs to be included in their work. Wherever possible, success criteria will be jointly constructed with pupils so that they are more directly involved with their own learning. Where appropriate, these success criteria will be presented as a rubric (see Appendix) to aid ongoing self-assessment.

As part of the school's Growth Mindset culture, and underpinned by two of our three school values 'Be Brave' and 'Be Involved', pupils are encouraged to offer their own explanations and interpretations during their learning, without fear of 'getting it wrong'. Mistakes are celebrated as learning opportunities and pupils are taught that learning that arises from exploring mistakes becomes more embedded in long-term memory.



EXPLORE

Our MAT Model
'Teachers facilitate and monitor pupil progress in learning and provide multiple, structured opportunities for practising new skills and developing agency. Pupils build on prior knowledge and explore and investigate objects, events and situations. Pupils construct or revise their own explanations and mental models.'

What This Looks Like At St Francis:

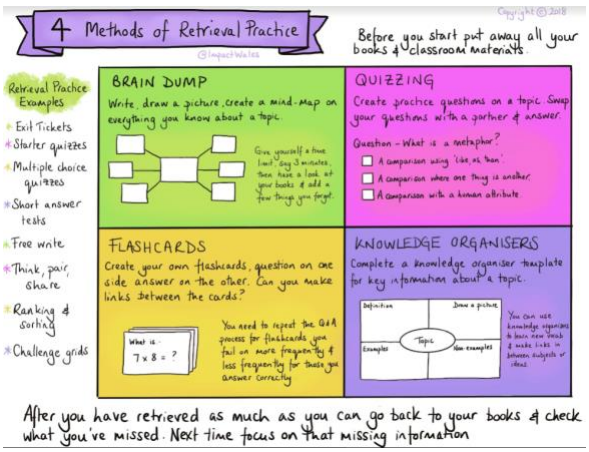


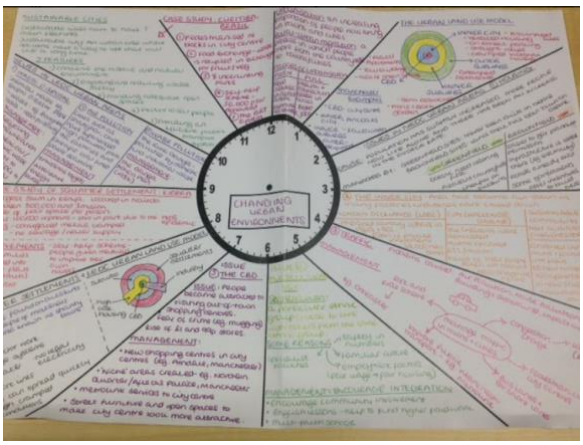
Looking for Proof: We want our pupils to be curious, brave learners, eager to embrace challenge and comfortable with exploring the unfamiliar. In order to achieve this, we encourage them to ask questions – being active, not passive, learners. Questions such as 'how', 'why', 'when', 'what' and 'what if' are actively encouraged and enable a deeper level of understanding to be achieved. Questions from pupils to teachers, teachers to pupils and pupils to each other allow for deep and connected thinking.

Pupils are provided with numerous opportunities to explore their learning in greater detail through the regular practice and application of both new and previously learned knowledge and skills. New learning is broken down into small chunks, with scaffolds or extensions where appropriate and then practised until pupils are fluent.

Our curriculum is planned in such a way as to allow them to apply their learning in different ways, building firmer connections between what they are taught and ensuring a 'mastery' approach. For example, when they have learned how to add fractions they might practice this skill in a range of problem-solving scenarios, create their own guide to adding fractions or design and deliver a presentation to their peers on the common mistakes pupils might make when they add fractions.

Our curriculum is also deliberately designed so that pupils have built-in opportunities to re-visit concepts, knowledge and skills they have previously been taught in order to consolidate their learning. Research shows that you learn more, and retain it for longer, when you retrieve information in different ways. Regular retrieval practice is planned into lessons and pupils are continually encouraged to identify links between what they already know and what they are being taught. Teachers use a wide range of retrieval techniques, including quizzes, mind-maps and flashcards.





ELABORATE

Our MAT Model

'Teachers challenge pupils to move from surface to deep learning, building their ability to transfer and generalise their learning. They support pupils to be reflective, questioning and self-monitoring learners. Pupils apply, extend or elaborate (stretch) their knowledge and skills through problem solving, designing experiments etc.'

What This Looks Like At St Francis:



Challenge: One of our school driver words is 'Aspiration': we have high expectations for all our pupils no matter what their starting points, and they are all provided with challenge opportunities through a 'low threshold, high ceiling' approach throughout the curriculum.

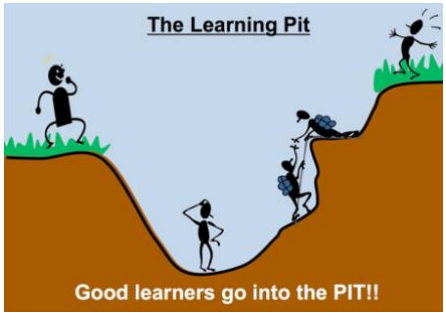
Teachers and Subject Leaders have a clear idea of what progression looks like in learning and know how to plan for learning activities which deepen understanding, such as providing opportunities to problem-solve, explain, justify, evaluate, analyse or create. Pupils are expected to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways, working both collaboratively and independently on tasks.

We encourage pupils to 'go deeper' into their learning by teaching them how they can formulate and test their own ideas, find and present evidence to support their thinking and present their findings confidently to an audience. We aim to develop learners who are also able to question others and have independent views backed up by clearly articulated evidence.

Teachers work hard to build strong relationships with all the pupils in their care; this establishment of a positive classroom climate based on mutual trust enables pupils to take risks with their learning – using and applying knowledge autonomously and confronting challenge with confidence.

We recognise that some pupils find challenge difficult; this is why we explicitly teach strategies to help them deal positively with it. From providing easily accessible self-help resources such as number-lines or word-banks, to sentence stems to help them formulate answers, to prominent classroom display reminders about how to approach challenge, St Francis is committed to enabling pupils to become autonomous in their response to challenge and to independently stretch their own learning.





EXPRESS

Our MAT Model

'Teachers design a range of purposeful tasks/opportunities that enable pupils to express and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the outcome or big question at the end of a sequence of work or topic. Pupils express the knowledge and understanding they have gained to answer the big question, demonstrating that they know and remember more.'

What This Looks Like At St Francis:



Feedback: We believe that feedback (from adults to pupils, pupils to adults or from pupils to pupils) should primarily be informative, not evaluative. This means that written and verbal feedback is designed to give the learner information which will enable them to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding as they work on a particular learning objective, rather than leaving it until the end when the lesson – or sequence of lessons – is over. Feedback, in order to be effective, needs to be' timely, specific and helpful' (Ron Berger).

However, the evaluation of pupils' work is a continuous process; when it occurs during the learning cycle (through observation, questioning, listening, small task completion etc.) it is called formative assessment; it helps the teacher to see how the pupil is progressing on their journey towards achieving the learning intention and gives them information to scaffold the next steps or to challenge pupils more deeply. When evaluations are completed at the end of a sequence of work or at certain assessment points during the year (through presentations, assessed work, tests etc) this is generally called summative assessment (although summative assessments can also be used for formative purposes.)

From Reception upwards, we encourage pupils to evaluate their own progress towards meeting their learning goals and to suggest what they might need to do to next. We do this by always making the different elements – or 'success criteria' – of a learning task very clear, using visual images as well as words (dual coding) where appropriate. Younger children use 'Treasure' (see Appendix) to help them identify their next steps in writing, whilst from Year 2 onwards they move towards using Rubrics (see Appendix) in a wide variety of subjects. Pupils are also taught strategies to help them articulate the evaluation of their own and others' work. These might include *feedback stem sentences* (see Appendix) to help them structure dialogue (for example 'One thing I found hard was…'/'Next time I will need to practice…'); *EBI* (Even Better If…); *Two Stars and a Wish*; *highlighter pens* (green for 'Good' and pink for 'Think') ***SWAN*** feedback (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses **A**nd **N**ext steps).

Learning is evaluated in different ways, depending on the age of the pupil and the nature of the learning objective. Pupils may complete PoP (Proof of Progress) tasks at different stages in the learning sequence and these are planned into the curriculum (see Appendix). They may design two page spreads in their Topic Books or showcase their learning in a creative project or presentation.

At two different points during the school year, pupils will also be formally assessed (see Appendix - Assessment Policy).

REVIEW

What This Looks Like At St Francis:

The Teaching and Learning Policy will be reviewed every two years – or sooner if necessary - by the SLT and Governors.

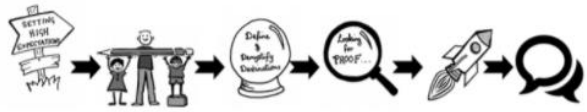
APPENDIX

- **RETRIEVAL STRATEGIES** (Link)

- **KNOWLEDGE ORGANISERS:** Knowledge Organisers set out all the essential knowledge that pupils need to know by the end of a topic. Wherever appropriate, they should contain facts, images, artefacts, maps and dates. They can be shared with parents and carers and used in class for retrieval purposes.
  - **Year 1 Topic example** (Link)
  - **Year 3 RE example** (Link)
  - **Year 4 Modern Foreign Languages example** (Link)
  - **Year 6 Topic example** (Link)

- **PoP TASKS Example** (Link) **and Stem Sentences for PoP tasks** (Link)

- **The St Francis Teaching Backwards Rubric** (Link)



- **'TREASURE'** Golden 'Coins' – each representing a particular writing target, are given to younger pupils to help them to structure the content of and evaluate their own work.



- **RUBRICS:** Co-constructed with pupils to provide expected and 'stretch' content for learning tasks. They enable teachers and pupils to evaluate progress and identify relevant next steps.

Rubric for a Rhyming Poem			
	❶	❷	❸
Rhymes	2 pairs of rhyming words.	3 or 4 pairs of rhyming words.	5 or more pairs of rhyming words.
Lines	There are between 4 and 8 lines in the poem.	There are between 9 and 16 lines in the poem.	There are more than 16 lines in the poem.
Presentation	All writing is on the line with finger spaces and...	... all letters are formed correctly and...	...more than half of the words are written in joined-up handwriting.

- **A 'KASH' (Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills & Habits) RUBRIC:**

DT – Making a Wooden Box – 4 week project			
	2	4	6
K	Explain what a saw, clamp, mitre, glue gun and screw-driver do...	...and name each correctly	...and explain any possible dangers when using them.
A	Listen carefully to instructions. To be able to follow them...	...and to ask relevant questions to improve knowledge or skills...	...and to offer suitable advice to peers. To be able to explain own 'next steps'.
S	To be able to measure wood correctly and saw lengths accurately...	...and to use a mitre and glue-gun to assemble right-angle joins.	...and to use screws and a screw-driver to join pieces securely.
H	To be able to independently choose appropriate resources...	...and to clear away own resources carefully.	To be able to share resources fairly. To independently help clear away class resources.

- **Feedback Stem sentences (Link)**
- **Feedback and Marking Policy**
- **Assessment Policy**
- **The St Francis Teaching Backwards Approach**
- **FACE Model (Feedback, Autonomy, Challenge, Engagement) (Link)**
- **Sequential Essentials for Planning Backwards**