



CASTLE COURT SCHOOL

We have one childhood. It has to be the best.

CURRICULUM POLICY

(Curriculum Statement for Parents)

Reviewed: September 2020

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Aims and Rationale

At Castle Court we aspire to provide a broad education of the highest quality. Consequently, our curriculum from Year 1 to Year 8 not only includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum, but extends well beyond its boundaries. This provides enrichment, enjoyment and challenge which stimulate pupils during their time with us and prepares them for the next stage of their education. After over 70 years, Castle Court's governance and leadership remain committed to our founders' intention of providing all our pupils with a first class, all-round education firmly rooted in Christian principles. These aspirations and values underpin all we do as we seek to encourage every member of the school community, whatever their faith or background, to strive for excellence in all that they do. Above all, we want everyone to feel part of a warm and welcoming family in which we all care for one another.

There are three main aims of the curriculum:

- To put pupils' learning and well-being at the heart of all that we do.
- To enable pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and character necessary to lead successful and fulfilled lives in an ever-changing world.
- To ensure that pupils are positive contributors to their school, their community and the wider world

Pupils are taught in small classes by highly qualified and experienced specialist teachers and teaching assistants. The learning experience at Castle Court is designed to promote progression, reflection, evaluation and collaboration. Pupils are encouraged to fulfil their potential in a number of ways: grouping or setting in certain subjects, small group work, a positive and encouraging marking system, clear target setting, regular assessment and feedback, and opportunities for further development through a comprehensive extra-curricular program. Curriculum plans are in place for each subject in each year group, with clear differentiation for levels of ability. We are committed to providing a sufficiently challenging curriculum and learning environment for all our pupils, including those who are considered gifted and talented. This is achieved by offering rich and varied opportunities for the development and extension of academic potential, both through the curriculum and extra-curricular program. A strong Learning Development department works closely with all other departments to offer advice and support on adapting program of study for pupils with LD needs; furthermore, booster groups and individual lessons are offered by the LD department, in consultation with parents. Above all, we know that a secure, happy child is far more likely to be able to fulfil his or her academic potential. We therefore place great emphasis on providing high quality pastoral care and on pupils' personal development.

Early Years Foundation Stage (Badger Cubs, Badgers and Reception classes)

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), our pupils enjoy a very broad educational experience following the Development Matters Early Years Foundation Stage framework. In the EYFS department, all the children enjoy free-flow access to the outdoor spaces so that they are able to play and learn outside as well as in the classrooms.

Parents play a very important part in the children's learning at this stage and are welcomed into the classrooms to talk about their children's learning. They are encouraged to join their children for story time every Friday afternoon. Parents are also invited into school for various events throughout the year. These include Harvest Festival, sewing morning, Easter Egg Hunt and this year 'Topic Exploration Sessions' at the start of each term. At the end of term there is a Topic Celebration time to which parents are also invited. Parents also contribute to learning by noting achievements their children are making at home which are then shared and celebrated at school.

The children benefit from specialist teachers for many subjects, including ballet and street dance, tennis, swimming, gymnastics, football and hockey skills, music and pottery. In Badgers and Reception, the children swim weekly at a nearby indoor swimming pool and are taught by swimming instructors.

In the second half of the summer term all three classes in the EYFS use the school's outdoor swimming pool. All the children in the EYFS department benefit from Forest School sessions at least once every week; the children all enjoy and greatly benefit from this holistic learning experience.

The children in the EYFS learn about other countries and cultures and they practice greetings in different languages. Some basic French spoken words and expressions are taught in Reception. In Badgers, the children complete a 'passport' as they focus on a different country each week, exploring its language, traditions, flags and food types. Parents from different countries are invited to come in and share their knowledge if they would like to. Sometimes they help the children to cook food from their homelands or show traditional clothes.

We do uphold the Christian foundation of the school and there are daily assemblies and prayers, such as before mealtimes and at the end of the days. Additionally, all the children find out about and celebrate different world religions and traditions, for example Chinese New Year. Children are introduced to all the British traditions and special days such as Pancake Day. There are daily assemblies and prayers, such as before mealtimes and at the end of the days. Children also enjoy drama and gain confidence on the stage as they perform their Christmas plays to the rest of the school and to their parents in the main school hall.

The children make excellent progress in their development and learning at Castle Court School. The achievements are recorded in the EYFS profile. The children are observed and photographic evidence of them as they play and learn is compiled using the Evidence Me system. Parents have access to this profile, whenever they wish, and it is shared with the class teacher at parent interviews. They are given the pictures and information at the end of every term.

Year 1 to Year 8

From Year 1 to Year 8, the core subjects of English, Maths and Science are taught, along with a wide range of other subjects, including French, History, Geography, Religious Studies, Design Technology, Music, Information and Communications Technology, Art and Design, Personal Social Citizenship and Health Education, Physical Education and Sport. Pupils are also introduced to Latin/Classical Civilisation in Year 6.

Pupils are comprehensively prepared for admission and scholarship exams to the schools of their choice. In Year 5, the weekly study skills lesson is used to help prepare pupils for admissions tests for senior schools, as well as focusing on key learning skills and behaviours such as growth mindset, critical thinking, debating and revision and study techniques.

Teaching is carefully planned so that pupils are working at a pace and level appropriate to their needs, enabling them to acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills, as well as facilitating their development of subject-specific knowledge and giving all pupils the opportunity to learn and make progress. In English and Maths, children are set from Year 3, with setting being offered in English, Maths, Science and French by Year 6. In other subjects, such as ICT, Art, PSCHE, Religious Studies, Speech & Drama, Dance, Music, PE and Design Technology, pupils enjoy being taught in mixed ability form groups.

The 7Cs

In September 2018, we implemented the 7Cs throughout the school. These are the qualities and values we want pupils to demonstrate at Castle Court and beyond. The 7Cs are:

To be:

- Curious
- Creative
- Committed

- Compassionate
- Courteous
- Collaborative
- Courageous

We see these as underpinning all aspects of life at Castle Court and the Castle Court family. We want to demonstrate that the education pupils receive here goes beyond just academic progress; it should also instill in pupils key values and qualities which we hope will guide and support them throughout their life.

PSB

In September 2020, the school introduced the Prep School Baccalaureate (PSB) in Years 7 and 8. PSB provides an accredited assessment model which has at its heart the development of the core skills of thinking and learning, reviewing and improving, and communicating. In addition to formal exams in their academic subjects, pupils are assessed on the core skills and how they achieve these independently, collaboratively and in terms of leadership. In this way, PSB offers a robust and rigorous assessment of children's academic ability, whilst also enabling an assessment of the whole child and their strengths as a learner. It therefore enables pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to be successful in an ever-changing world.

SEND

At Castle Court we aim to provide comprehensive and effective support for our pupils with learning development needs including those with an EHCPs. Wherever possible, we encourage all pupils to join in the activities within their classroom environment, as well as outside, if this is agreed to be reasonably practical. Pupils may also be involved in small group lessons and individual lessons where necessary, if they are struggling to acquire specific learning skills, or are falling behind their peers. Our aim is to give every child in the school equal opportunities to access the whole curriculum. Staff at Castle Court are aware that provisions for pupils with specific learning needs is a matter for the whole school community, in addition to the governing body, the school's Head teacher, the SENCO and the Learning Support Team. All members of staff play a shared and crucial role in helping all pupils to access the curriculum. The continuous cycle of planning, teaching, assessment and evaluation has an embedded desire to differentiate learning within the classroom. Every teacher is required to take account of the wide range of abilities, aptitudes and interests of the pupils. For further information please refer to the school's Learning Development policy.

Homework, future schools and careers advice

Homework is set from Year 3 to Year 8. In Years 3 and 4, pupils should expect to have spellings and times tables to learn, as well as English and Maths homework and/or research for topic-based learning. From Year 5, a more formal homework timetable is issued: Year 5 should expect to have four pieces of homework per week, in English, Maths, Science and French (French homework is a weekly learning task). Year 6 have one piece of homework each day covering the core curriculum subjects, a weekly learning task for French, History and Geography and Latin. In Years 7 and 8, homework is extended to include TPE (Theology, Philosophy and Ethics). Homework tasks should normally take about 30 minutes to complete; however, in Years 7 and 8, the additional depth of study required may mean that homework tasks take up to 45 minutes. In Years 7 and 8, we support our pupils aiming for senior schools of all types through appropriate setting in English, Maths, Science, French, Latin,

History and Geography, interview practice, and, where necessary, scholarship-specific preparation with specialist staff. Pupils within Years 7 and 8 are also directed more to thinking about possible careers choices through aspects of PSCE provision and a focus on potential careers paths during the post-examination period in the summer term.

Use of ICT

The school is committed to providing a 21st century education for our pupils. We therefore aim to help our pupils become highly skilled and discerning users of ICT in a school with high quality and up-to-date software, hardware and infrastructure. All our students from Year 3 – 8 have been using iPads to enhance their learning since September 2015. Every student in the school has an office 365 account and this is used to log into the PCs around the school and their iPads. We have adopted Microsoft Teams, OneNote and Moodle to establish and develop an E-curriculum. The use of these platforms has enabled us to develop the learning experience for our pupils, promote effective strategies to monitor progress for teaching staff and provide clear and real-time feedback for parents. The IT software and hardware are kept under constant review to ensure that we provide pupils with a high quality 21st century education.

Scholarships and future schools

We are fully committed to helping each one of our pupils fulfil their potential. We have an excellent reputation for preparing pupils for a range of scholarships including academic, all-rounder, art, design and technology, drama, music and sport. We work closely with senior schools to ensure a smooth transition for our leavers. Year after year, our leavers are successful in gaining entry to the school best suited to them and their families. Information on entry to Grammar Schools and Scholarship applications can be obtained from either the Headmaster or Deputy Head.

PE and Games

PE and Games are taught to all our pupils and, from Year 1 upwards, they have the equivalent of one hour per day, spread across the week. The boys play Football, Rugby, Hockey and Cricket, the girls play Hockey, Netball and Rounders. All pupils take part in Swimming, Tennis, Athletics and other PE activities through the year. Pupils achieve a high level of success, both as individuals and as members of school teams.

Music

We have a strong tradition in music-making with a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular musical activities. Singing forms part of the curriculum for all year groups, in addition to instrumental playing from Year 2 onwards. Children in EYFS receive 1 curricular music lesson per week and children in Years 2 - 8 receive 2 curricular music lessons per week. In all classes, from Badgers upwards, music is taught by specialist musicians. We provide free group tuition on a range of instruments to children in Years 3 and 4. Many of our pupils receive individual music lessons in a wide range of instruments, including singing and music theory.

We currently have a number of extra-curricular music groups rehearsing on a weekly basis including orchestra, choir, plus a range of strings, woodwind, brass and percussion ensembles. Typically, these involve children from Year 3 onwards. Performing opportunities for these groups are many and varied, including an informal concert series, major school concerts and regional orchestral courses at Bryanston. All children experience performing in whole-school concerts and events, including singing in nativity plays and forming choirs for the Carol Service in Wimborne Minster. By the time they leave Castle Court, a number of pupils achieve Grade 6 or above in an instrument or voice and a number win music scholarships to their chosen senior school.

Performing Arts

The performing arts are an important part of life at Castle Court School. Through drama and dance we aim to build confidence, develop creativity and communication skills and allow children the opportunity to work successfully as part of a group. Opportunities to perform exist throughout the school. Children in Badgers and Pre-prep, directed by their class teachers, perform nativity plays at the end of the Autumn Term and go on to present a full-scale musical production in both Years 3 and 4.

All pupils in Years 3 to 8 also receive specialist timetabled drama and dance lessons. In drama, they learn new skills including mime, improvisation, role-play and script work. We use poems, stories and play texts as the starting point for drama work and in this way support the work of the English department. Pupils develop confidence in performing their work to others, as well as learning to respond positively as a member of an audience.

In dance, pupils in Badgers and Reception have a ballet lesson each week, girls then continue ballet in Year 1 and Year 2. From Year 3, all children have a weekly dance lesson in our dance studio in which they are taught a range of dance styles from different eras and cultures. These include Street

Dance, Salsa, Ballroom, Charleston, Bollywood and African dance. As pupils progress, they are taught about performance, presentation, and learn about choreography and improvisation from Year 5. For pupils who wish to develop their skills further, there are opportunities to do so in after school activities. There are junior drama and dance clubs for pupils in Years 4 and 5 and for pupils in the senior school there are optional drama and dance activities which culminate in a Summer Term performance to parents. Previous productions have included Shakespeare's *'The Tempest'* and musical productions of *'Wind in the Willows'* and *'Bugsy Malone'*. For pupils in Years 2 to 8, they may take private dance lessons in Ballet, Tap and Street dance. Pupils in Years 5 to 8 may also take private Speech and Drama lessons in which they work towards LAMDA examinations in either Acting or the Speaking of Verse and Prose.

Opportunities to watch live theatre are also provided when possible, either by bringing professional companies to school or by taking trips to the theatre.

Extra-curricular camps and activities

In 2019, the school introduced Scott Days, named after our founders, on which pupils in Years 3-8 are taken off timetable for the day giving them more meaningful opportunities to explore life-skills or go deeper into aspects of the curriculum: we have seen pupils in Year 5 putting on a 'Play-in-a-day', trips to Kimmeridge, Hampton Court and the Russell-Cotes Museum, along with pupils taking part in an accredited first aid course and learning to host a sports tournament as part of their Sport Leadership program. These days give us a chance to look beyond examination grades and progress tests, to give our children the opportunity to think about and experience life beyond Castle Court: in recent terms it has given us the opportunity to introduce new strands to our children's wider curriculum, including environmental issues and classical architecture, as well as enabling more in-depth engagement on important PSHE topics and a far-reaching STEM program, involving colleagues from a variety of different departments working in partnership with local businesses. As pupils see the barriers between their traditional timetabled subjects being broken down on such days, they begin to appreciate more fully the wide-ranging applications of the topics they are learning, preparing them more readily for life in the 'real' world, where opportunities and challenges don't manifest themselves in neat 'subject-areas' and usually require an interdisciplinary response and the flexibility to adapt: skills learnt in one area of school life may end up being put to the test, honed and used to the full in an entirely different area of life in the real world.

All pupils in Years 3-8 have the opportunity to take part in Activities Week in the Summer Term which includes a wide range of extra-curricular camps and activities:

Year 3

All Year 3 pupils are invited to take part in an overnight camp in the school grounds where they will be fully involved in making and breaking camp as well as cooking for themselves.

Year 4

All Year 4 pupils visit The New Barn Field Centre for an overnight residential trip. The trip is mainly science-based and also incorporates fun activities, such as fire making and night walks.

Year 5

All year 5 pupils complete a 3 day residential visit to Normandy, experiencing French life and culture in an area of historical significance.

Year 6

All Year 6 pupils embark on this adventurous 5 day camp (split across two sites). Pupils take part in a

range of activities such as sailing, bushcraft, den-building and climbing.

Year 7

All pupils complete a week-long residential course in Normandy, where a variety of exciting outward-bound activities is offered in a fully French-speaking environment.

Year 8

Pupils enjoy a week-long residential camp at a Christian activity centre in Devon, offering a relaxing, yet challenging programme of activities.

Evening activities

There is a wide range of activities on offer every evening (from 4.45 to 5.45pm) for pupils in Years 3 to 8. This serves to broaden an already rich curriculum and allows all pupils to find something which inspires them and which they enjoy. The Art, DT and ICT rooms are popular venues during these times, allowing pupils to extend their skills and contribute to the high standard of work produced by our pupils in these subjects. In addition, various activities such as golf, horse riding, chess, coding, multi-sports and Greek for beginners are also offered. Prep is also available for those pupils wishing to complete homework. This is held in the classroom next to the library so pupils have access to additional resources. Prep is supervised by a member of staff.

For pupils in Years 1 and 2 there is a range of after school activities between 3.45 and 4.15 for them to enjoy. For example, adventure club, film club and computer club.

Review schedule

This policy document should be reviewed on an annual basis in September and presented to the Governors' Education Committee meeting for scrutiny and adoption in the Autumn Term.