



St John's Highbury Vale C of E Primary School

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Interim Executive Head Teacher: Mrs Tonnie Read

Interim Head of School: Mrs Lindsey Hodgson

Wednesday 30th October 2019

Parent Forum – New Curriculum

The new curriculum has been written to tailor the needs of the children at St John's and to ensure that a broad and balanced curriculum is being taught.

On first arriving at St John's one of the first things I noticed was that our children were afraid to make mistakes and afraid to get things wrong. So to design a curriculum which encourages mistakes, encourages enquiry around big, philosophical questions, would help promote the idea that sometimes there is more than one answer.

Using the story of the bible, we chose six sections from the eight and then as a leadership team, came up with big questions that would be able to be applied to not just RE, but to all subjects and topics. The questions are so big, that we may not be able to find an answer, or our first answer might not have been the right one and so we need to start again. This is what we decided our children at St John's needed, the freedom to see that this could be the case.

In line with this we realized that to apply these big questions to History, Science or Geography topics, we would have to give them more time than we currently were in the weekly timetables. We wanted to really use the enquiry approach and link these subjects with as much art and DT as possible. So we decided to introduce 'Creative Fridays'.

Having a full day on a Friday to teach the foundation subjects through a much more enquiry led and creative way has allowed so much to happen. These subjects are now being prepared for very well, rather than teachers having half an hour after lunch to prepare for an art lesson, or a science experiment, they can set up the night before and have a full day to cover the topic they are working on. It also allows a lot more flexibility in the rest of the time table on an afternoon. Children are now getting all subjects that may have previously not happened, or dropped off the timetable due to lack of time. All classes are now having a weekly music lesson, a weekly RE, PSHE and computing lessons. They are all also receiving the two hours of PE they are entitled to also.





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The response we have had from the children so far regarding Fridays has been amazing. They really are holding the teachers to account and wanting their creative day, wondering what it is they will be doing from week to week. They seem really engaged in their learning and they are having fun, which is great to see.

Teachers are also embracing the changes and as time moves forward, they are definitely pushing themselves out of their comfort zones, trying new things and getting messy.

This is all new, and a huge work in progress for us, but a positive start has been seen already. We will work hard this year to develop, adapt and tweak as we go, ensuring that what we have in place meets all the needs of our children and that the curriculum continues to be a broad and balanced one, which they love and enjoy.

The accompanying slides were those that I talked through this morning at the parent forum, but I am very much of a talker than someone who gives a lot of slides to read. So, hopefully this narrative alongside the slides will help those of you who couldn't make this morning's meeting, have a bit more of an understanding of our new enquiry based curriculum.

As always thank you so much for your support and understanding in everything we do. Also a huge thank you for your extremely kind donations to FOSJ+, as it is some of that money we are using to buy the art and DT materials we need to be able to bring the curriculum and the children's learning to life.

A parent said to me this morning, 'my child doesn't even think she is learning on a Friday, she is having that much fun, but in her excitement of telling us about her day she is giving us so many facts she has picked up.'

Best wishes,

Lindsey Hodgson
Interim Head of School

