

Curriculum

As a Christian school, Melville-Knox Christian School teaches many subjects in a way that differs from that of the mainstream education system. Parents – and students – unfamiliar with the concept of Christian education might find initial difficulty in adjusting to the differences.

Although, at times, the school uses good secular materials and resources to teach several subjects, it will always supplement this material and, if necessary, amend it in order to secure faithfulness to Biblical facts and principles.

Additionally, as a Reformed Christian school, it may be the case that children and parents of various denominations might find some teaching different from that of their own churches. In the initial interview, School Management Committee members will have information detailing the school's curriculum in greater detail as well as specimen textbooks.

For a preview, below is a brief summary of the school's curriculum and resources.

- **Literacy Skills (English)**

In the early Primary years, the school makes use of Jolly Phonics, a well-established, child-centred approach to teaching literacy through synthetic phonics, and Jolly Grammar, an all-rounded program that involves the systematic teaching of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary.

For the upper Primary years, the 'My Spelling Workbook' series is used. This is a phonetic spelling programme, focussing on teaching spelling strategies using a variety of spelling games and activities. All pupils have access to a variety of levelled reading books and novels.

Throughout all levels, the school makes use of the 'Big Writing' approach and aims to develop the pupils' literacy skills and proficiency through the exposure to and study of classic children's literature.

- **Mathematics and Numeracy**

The school uses White Rose Maths, which is a scheme of work that is best known for the opportunities it creates for pupils to apply their knowledge through reasoning and problem-solving tasks. It helps to build the conceptual understanding of mathematics by using concrete objects, pictorial representations, and abstract thinking. Pupil's mathematics skills are assessed regularly using White Rose termly assessment papers.

- **Science**

The school teaches all the Sciences, including the scientific aspects of Geography and Environmental Studies, from the basis of the Biblical account of origins and history following a four-year cycle in which all six days of Creation are covered. In the P4-7 class, other points of view, such as evolution, are looked at and critically examined. The 'God's Design for Science', a Bible-based and Creator-centred curriculum, informs the core content of what is covered in lessons.

- **Social Studies**

The school also teaches Social Studies from the basis of the Biblical account of origins and history.

Accordingly, the school will teach that history and geography is to be seen as the outworking of God's eternal plan and providence and, as such, as a series of events that have meaning and purpose. The Biblical accounts of the Creation, the Fall and the Global Flood – foundational events in Biblical history – will be taught and will be presented as an interpretive backdrop against which the rest of history is to be understood. 'The Mystery of History', a world history curriculum written from a biblical worldview, forms the core of the Social Studies taught by the school.

- **Biblical Studies**

Melville-Knox Christian School teaches Christianity from the perspective of Reformed Theology. Parents are asked to familiarise themselves with one or all of the school's approved confessions of faith if they are not yet familiar with the teachings of Reformed Theology.

At Melville-Knox Aberdeen, Biblical studies falls into two categories: Catechism and Religious Education. Pupils take part in daily catechism class during Assembly, which is based on the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Pupils will also take part in weekly Religious Education lessons in class. In these lessons, pupils will learn, discover and recognise the lives of significant Christian figures through history and learn about their impact on Christianity, doctrine and practice. The lives of those looked at are set in the context of the term topic.

Pupils are also required to learn a Bible memory verse a week and will be assessed the following week.

In the interests of inclusiveness and unity, the school will use the New King James version of the Bible and will sing Psalms from the Scottish Psalter for worship.

As children come from various denominations, with different theological emphases and church practices, the school will aim to steer away from controversial issues – for example, it will refrain from teaching on whether certain forms of worship are correct or not. In the event of a child referring to a teaching they are receiving in the church or from their parents as being different from that which appears to be taught or allowed in the school, the teacher will refer the child back to their parents and their churches for an appropriate answer on the issue. This policy is put in place in order to avoid situations in which teachers undermine parents or churches' teaching where possible. However, in order to stay true to Reformed Theology, this might not always be feasible.

Regarding festivals celebrated in the school, please see section on Cultural Education for more details.

Parents who have concerns with the school's teaching on the Bible or Theology are encouraged to talk the issue through in the initial interview. If other issues arise later, parents may speak to the teacher who is to examine if the teaching that was given is consistent with the Reformed Theology. If the teaching is found to be in agreement with the Reformed Theology, teachers are to inform parents on what the teaching is based on and may continue to teach as they have. If the concern of the parent remains, the parent remains free to speak to the head teacher or a member of the School Management Committee for further advice.

Should it be discovered that a teacher has taught in a manner inconsistent with the Reformed Theology, that teacher will be expected to apologise and adjust their teaching accordingly.

- **Health, Safety and Character Development**

The school follows a three-year health, safety and character development cycle, in which all the main aspects of health and safety are covered and in which character development is taught from a biblical perspective.

- **Sex Education**

The school believes that sex education is the responsibility of parents and this will be clarified at the interview.

- **Second Language**

The school believes that early exposure to different languages is beneficial to a child's development in literacy skills. German is currently taught to all pupils.

- **Physical Education**

PE introduces children to various ball games and forms of sports, including athletics, basic gymnastics as well as muscle and stamina building exercises and the development of gross motor co-ordination. In addition to physical exercise, PE teaches children theory regarding how to look after their bodies, treating illnesses and applying first aid.

- **Arts**

The school teaches Expressive Arts that include Art, Craft & Design, and Music, Movement & Drama. The Expressive Arts taught will complement the themes covered in Social Studies and Science lessons. If parents have a concern on these areas, e.g. what kind of art and music their children will be exposed to during the lessons, they are to voice their concerns prior to the interview and the school will send detailed descriptions for these subjects. These concerns can then be further discussed during the interview.

- **IT and Technologies**

A considerable amount of technology is taught throughout the curriculum. As this process involves the use of the internet for searching, the school will have child protective filters on the children's computers to ensure their safety.

- **Assemblies**

Every school morning will begin with an assembly. During the assemblies, pupils will learn to sing Psalms and will learn from the Westminster Shorter Catechism as well as commit passages of scripture to memory. Pupils will also learn Bible stories from the Old and New Testament. Sometimes visitors will be invited to speak at school's assemblies. Assemblies will close with singing and prayer in which all school staff will be present.

Cultural Education

As clearly explained in the Guiding Principles document, the aim of the school is to educate the children not only in academic and spiritual matters, but also on cultural matters.

In some cases, children are brought up fairly secluded from the mainstream culture and spend most of their time among people from their own sub-culture. Being culturally literate in the 21st century Britain is part of the teaching objectives.

Most of cultural teaching happens naturally and unintentionally but some might be more intentional (for example teaching on national festivals, such as Guy Fawkes Day or Burns Supper) or on national dress or dance.

Curriculum Information,

v. 1.0, 24.05.2023

However, the school's Biblical foundation means that it will be opposed to much that is considered normal in the mainstream culture. This includes the myth of Santa Claus, Fairies, Easter Bunnies and the like. Also, the school does not celebrate certain national festivals. For example, instead of Halloween, the school will hold a Reformation Day. And while opportunities will be used, at Christmas and Easter, to highlight the importance of the incarnation, the passion and the resurrection, there is no provision made in the school for Christmas or Easter services or nativity plays.

As to the use of media, so influential in today's culture, teachers may introduce well-known characters from TV and other media (as long as they are child friendly) in order to make children aware of this part of their culture if they aren't already. Parents might take objection to some choices on cultural education which teachers have made. Teachers in the school are advised to listen to parents' concerns and will accommodate them when possible.

Also, on occasion, the school will use TV programs, documentaries or films in teaching. Teachers are instructed to be sensitive when using any of these media, always ensuring that they fill a learning objective and that they are well integrated into the lessons.

Programs that portray values, behaviour or teaching in opposition to the school's values, behaviour and teaching are generally avoided.

Sensitive Topics

As the school is comprised of families from a number of denominations there are some beliefs and practices held by families at the school which may be unfamiliar to some parents and which may therefore unknowingly cause offence. For instance, there are families who do not celebrate Christmas or Easter, who only read from the Authorised (King James) version of the Bible, only sing unaccompanied psalms in worship and who do not read Bible story books (or draw images) that contain images of God or Jesus. While we are not asking families that join the school to refrain from these practices, we feel it would be good that new families are aware of such issues and where possible, make an effort not to send in books or other materials to school with their children that may cause offence to others.