

Covenant Christian School

Curriculum Policy

Introduction

In the beginning God gave mankind a task. He said "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1 v 28). Education is the transmission of culture from one generation to another (see for example Psalm 78). By culture we mean the total human effort to fulfil this task. This includes practical, physical activities such as agriculture as well as the "high" culture of artistic and academic achievement. However, we cannot teach all that constitutes culture today so we select. It is this selection which makes up the curriculum. Since this selection is governed by our worldview and the principles and values that follow from it, it must essentially and comprehensively be a religious exercise. The basis for the curriculum must therefore be the Word of God as it relates to every aspect of human existence. It is not intended that the curriculum will be a negative reaction to secularism ; rather it is a positive celebration of Christian education.

Curriculum Aims

1. Christ is the Unambiguous Centre

Being a Christian school, the structure and content of our curriculum will be governed by the Word of God and above all, Christ will be central in all things. Teachers will always be expected to adjust their lessons to the "age, aptitude and ability" of their classes. However, since the curriculum is to be Christ centred, its overall plan will not be child-centred. Nor will it primarily be subject-centred, an approach which frequently leads to fragmentation. In his letter to the Colossians chapter one Paul writing about the supremacy of Christ says, "He is before all things and in Him all things hold together". The school therefore aims to operate a curriculum that is both integrated and gives Christ his rightful place. This implies the curriculum will have an overall plan. Through its structure the curriculum will convey to parents and pupils alike that the world is ordered because God has so ordained it and through this order, life has meaning and purpose.

2. God's Good Gifts Must Not be Wasted

Although we are all made in the image of God, he gives us diverse giftings. Therefore if the school is to develop the gifts of every child, it must operate a curriculum that is both broad and balanced. Although the primary curriculum will not be divided into subjects, it will aim to contain material from all of the arts, the humanities and the sciences and be a platform for developing a wide range of skills including computer literacy. Gifting, however, is not limited to academic ability. God is concerned about our whole being. The curriculum will therefore foster every child's spiritual, moral and physical development.

3. The Curriculum will be Relevant

The school must prepare all its pupils for life in the 21st century. Therefore there will be an emphasis on the basic skills of English and Mathematics in the primary years, taught in lessons catering for children of all abilities and in the last three years of the school the pupils will be prepared for the GCSE examinations. The curriculum will be designed to make this a realistic option. In addition the biblical teaching will be weighted towards applied rather than pure theology. If the children are to develop an appetite for lifelong learning and if all those in the school are to appreciate God's goodness in creation, the curriculum will also need to make school a positive and enjoyable experience for both children and teachers. Education should be fun.

We should remember our children will grow up to be parents, neighbours, citizens and probably members of some congregation. Their education should train them for this. They must also be trained to evaluate what they see and hear, to understand Christian criteria for distinguishing between what is good and what is bad. They need to know the historical roots of our civilisation in order to grasp, for example, the competing ideologies of today.

The Shape of the School Curriculum

To achieve these aims, the curriculum for children aged 5 to 12 will be built around a comprehensive series of overarching projects. Each of these projects must have a wide brief, within which children can explore a broad spectrum of God's creation and must be large enough to enable teachers to unfold the associated Christian teaching and show how it applies to life today. This framework is different from what is normally encountered in British schools. Hopefully this discourages teachers from mindlessly teaching what is taught elsewhere regardless of its worldview pedigree.

The projects are also selected so that taken together children have, by Year 9, a platform from which they can attempt the GCSE examinations. Thus the choice of Communication for those in Years 6 and 7 was made because it can underpin GCSE work in English, Art, Science, Foreign Languages and even Computing.

The structure of these projects will be based on the answer to three worldview questions and two biblical patterns. The proportions of time given to each of the questions and patterns will vary according to the nature of the project. We consider the following.

a) What is it? i.e. what in God's eyes is the project about. To obtain integration we study the "relational pattern". This considers the project in relation to God and the realms of his creation identified in the Bible, the angelic, human, animal and plant kingdoms and the kingdom of non-living creatures. Sometimes we study it here but sometimes it is more appropriately taught in section (c).

b) What is its value? This will be an ongoing concern of the project. In addition, the answer to this question will also be the focus of the project's conclusion. We will look at its value to God, as well as its value to all of creation.

c) How does it function? The structure in this section will be based on the second pattern of scripture we use, the creation, fall, redemption and consummation pattern which inevitably focusses on the pivotal role of Christ. This will effectively reflect the redemptive historical nature of events and their relationship to the work of salvation, which was brought to fulfilment in the incarnation. History is for us a key subject since it involves an understanding of the past, provides the key to the present and demonstrates the purpose and destiny of the human race.

Alongside these projects, there will in the early years be "Continuing Studies", daily lessons in English and Mathematics, since a proficiency in these subjects is crucial to living in modern times and basic to the rest of the curriculum. The timetable for each class will also provide opportunities for physical development.

Between Years 7 to 9 the projects are gradually replaced by those subjects which might lead into a GCSE programme. Art, Design and Technology, English, Geography, IT, Mathematics, Music, Science, RE and a Foreign Language. History is also taught separately from Year 7 so that it can be handled chronologically and starting in the third millennium BC, can include the background to Old Testament times.

We aim to offer GCSE in at least English, Mathematics, Science, a Foreign Language and a Humanity. We also wish to prepare pupils to understand at a more mature level some of the most important material of their earlier studies in the projects. We therefore aim to offer two complementary units, Family Studies and Worldviews.

*** the school arranges a biannual visit to an outdoor pursuits centre.

Home and School - Implementing the Total Curriculum

Education does not start and end with school. We therefore consider what aspects of the curriculum are left to the parents and what should be attempted within the school. We do this by considering education in relation to the three Creation Ordinances. Before the fall God ordained the institutions of the Sabbath, the family and work. He hallowed the seventh day; He gave Adam a wife, and work to do. Adam was to till the earth and to care for it. (Gen 2v15)

a) The Sabbath Ordinance deals with a person's direct relationship with God. God is with us all the time, when we are with the family and when we are at work but on the Sabbath we set aside time to worship Him explicitly rather than implicitly. So, for example, we are thinking here about prayer and bible study. Christian parents are expected to fulfil their obligations in this area by,

- i) teaching at home about God and what he requires of us,
- ii) setting an example through their own patterns of behaviour,
- iii) taking their children to a church where there is true worship and faithful preaching.

The school augments the work of the families

- (i) by endeavouring to honour God in every part of its ministry through the example of its teachers
- (ii) through class devotions at the start of each school day,
- (iii) through supplementary teaching on related issues e.g. church history, worldviews.

b) The Family Ordinance deals in the first instance with a person's relationship with his or her family but in a more general way typifies his or her relationship with the whole human kingdom. Here the key idea is serving others. This leads to what may be called the social curriculum. Christian parents are expected to fulfil their obligations in this area by,

- i) explicit teaching at home backed up by example,
- ii) monitoring the child's relationship with other members of the family, other children and adults,
- iii) encouraging the development of a servant heart,
- iv) enabling them to experience appropriate social institutions e.g. a youth group.

The school augments the work of the families by

- i) explicit teaching on social relationships and social institutions,
- ii) encouraging right relationships within the school,
- iii) identifying and developing each child's social gifts.

c) The Labour Ordinance, in the terms of the Genesis narrative, deals with a person's relationship with the sub-human kingdom. The key idea is stewardship.

Christian parents are expected to fulfil their obligations in this area by,

- i) living a lifestyle that respects all aspects of creation,
- ii) teaching what they know about animals plants and non-living things,
- iii) encouraging their children to learn about and to look after all aspects of God's world.

The school augments the work of the families by

- i) explicit teaching on stewardship especially within the projects and later in geography and science,
- ii) teaching those technical aspects of God's world not usually known or understood by parents.