



Bishop Chadwick  
Catholic Education Trust



# Curriculum Vision

2024/2026

# Curriculum Intent

## Powerful Knowledge:

The Confederation of School Trusts (CST) promotes that possibly the strongest school improvement lever we have is the curriculum.

According to Michael Young, the curriculum should be the best knowledge - the most powerful knowledge, knowledge that goes beyond 'common sense', or beyond that which we would acquire every day. It should allow our pupils to unlock institutionalised cultural capital and form the whole person through simultaneously developing their physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual talents.

At Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust (BCCET) we empower all learners by providing each individual with the knowledge, skills, and cultural capital they require for future learning, employment, and the capacity to fulfil their God-given potential.

We are committed to maintaining and developing Catholic Education in the areas we serve. The message of 'Christ at the Centre' is held at the core of our curriculum vision. This requires all our schools to be places where the entire community encounters a transforming love and trust, which ultimately determines and guides all that they do.

Our curriculum exists to ensure every child or young person's journey into adulthood is a journey of faith. It empowers and equips our pupils with the knowledge, character virtues, and learning skills required to thrive in learning and life and is a driver of equality and social cohesion.

The values of our curriculum therefore give agency to more than just academic potential. We seek for our pupils to thrive in a globalised world, and to present all pupils regardless of background the opportunities to be creative and empathetic when faced with existential challenges.

## Curriculum Continuity:

The importance of a good start to secondary school education is crucial and therefore in 2019, our collaborative trust-wide approach to curriculum design commenced. Our curriculum continuity work set out to provide a solution to Ofsted's annual report in 2014, where it was detailed that transition from primary to secondary school was 'poorly handled and the gains pupils made at primary school were not embedded or developed at Key Stage 3', often referred to as the 'wasted years'.

Robust cross-phase partnerships were developed to ensure that the curriculum design enabled individual subjects to be taught exceptionally well; building on prior knowledge, understanding, and skills to ensure pupils know and remember more.

Each subject carries accumulated wisdom derived from great traditions of knowledge construction in academic and artistic fields, each with its own rules of enquiry and evidence. These must be mastered if the wider routes of subjects are to be opened to our pupils.

As Myatt identifies, we cannot learn everything; planning is as much about deciding what not to teach as it is about what to include. Therefore, the Threshold Curriculum Framework is essential in ensuring that knowledge should be taught to be understood and remembered, not just encountered.

The knowledge of the subject expert was therefore crucial in the construction of our Threshold Framework: *Curriculum Continuity*. Subject curriculum experts worked collaboratively to plan and identify the threshold concepts, evaluating and reviewing the powerful knowledge narrative identified within each subject discipline. As a result, curriculum design is of high challenge and coherently sequenced to support pupil acquisition whilst ensuring continuity in learning from early years to key stage 5.

Working in subject domains across our family of schools allows agency within this powerful cycle of collaboration and has put curriculum development and subject knowledge at the heart of school life and learning.





*"Curriculum exists to change the pupil,  
to give the pupil new power."*

Christine Counsell

# Threshold Curriculum

Our curriculum design is built upon 6 key principles:

## 1. Threshold concepts

Threshold concepts define powerful transformative points in the pupil's learning experience. They identify key curriculum areas that all pupils must master.

Our threshold curriculum is anchored in high challenge for all and provides the platform for empowering and equipping pupils with the foundations for examination success and lifelong learning. To facilitate this, the curriculum identifies threshold concepts.

At BCCET we believe that threshold concepts open up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding or interpreting or doing something without which the learner cannot progress.

If pupils have access to, understand, and can use the conceptual, and technical vocabulary expertly and confidently, we are leading them into the territory of long-term memory.

Threshold concepts are carefully interleaved within the curriculum from early years to key stage 5, so that they are revisited and reinforced with different content and context attached to the concept over time, this provides pupils with the opportunity to develop mastery.

## 2. Mastery and deep learning

Threshold concepts are mastered through repeated intelligent sequencing, which allows the pupil to apply these concepts to different contexts from early years to key stage 5. Our curriculum by design avoids leaving gaps in learners' conceptual understanding and makes time and room for 'deep' learning and understanding of threshold concepts over a young person's journey into adulthood.

## 3. Long term memory

Recent advances in the science of learning have shown that retrieval and sequencing are critical for robust, durable, long-term learning. This is a key element of our threshold curriculum.

Every time a memory is retrieved, that memory becomes more accessible in the future. Retrieval also helps people create coherent and integrated mental representations of complex concepts, the kind of deep learning necessary to solve new problems and draw new inferences.

Long-term memory is the foundation for incorporating and making sense of new knowledge. Material sits in the long-term memory when it has been 'chunked' into meaningful schemata, stories, or concepts. Sequencing threshold concepts over the journey of the curriculum helps pupils to make progress and allows pupils to apply the threshold concepts in different contexts within and across subjects.



*'When children understand concepts, it makes new knowledge stickier.'*

**Mary Myatt**









4. High challenge for all. When pupils are provided with difficult work that causes them to think deeply, they engage in a healthy struggle. The curriculum is designed for a high challenge, low-risk culture. Lemov argues that it is only by giving our pupils work that makes them struggle, and having the highest possible expectations of them, will we be able to move them beyond what they know and can do now.

5. Reading, Writing and communication. To have access to and master deep subject knowledge, pupils need to be exposed to the cultural capital of language.

“*‘Reading, writing, vocabulary, speaking, listening, debate...the complex tapestry of great teaching, enacted in every lesson, in every phase and subject domain, by every teacher.’*  
**Alex Quigley**

As a Trust, all schools are united in one common goal; to teach children to be effective readers by rooting the curriculum in appropriate fiction and non-fiction reading material, and fostering a genuine passion, enthusiasm, and appreciation of reading. We believe for all pupils a strong command of language is not only essential in the wider academic world, but it can also affect a pupil’s self-esteem and confidence.

The threshold curriculum explicitly identifies the words that we want our pupils to understand, this ‘word consciousness’ initiates a new way of thinking for our pupils that can prove of life-long worth.

6. Character Framework. At Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, we have a commitment to immerse pupils in a journey of character development. In doing so, we strive to best support and prepare pupils as good people, grounded in values and with the essential virtues to ensure success and happiness as together we learn, live, lead, and work in tomorrow's world.

“*The role of Catholic education is to “Cultivate virtues and form personal values, rooted in the Gospel of Christ and expressed in the teachings of the Catholic Church, which will enable pupils to develop an understanding of their communal obligations, personal aspirations and their role as citizens in society and the world”*  
*Christ at the Centre.*

Our character framework identifies six-character competencies and four learner skills that are explicitly taught throughout the curriculum. These are interconnected and when combined, provide opportunities for pupils to develop, good character within their academic studies in a planned and purposeful way. It is these virtues and skills that we believe pupils will also need to thrive in the future in their chosen careers and as citizens in their communities.

Supporting our Curriculum: Our threshold curriculum is focused on pupils' understanding and development at greater depth rather than on mere progression to the next set of content. It is necessary that all pupils have a deep knowledge to have the opportunity to understand and apply the threshold concepts over time.

To ensure pupils can define key vocabulary and apply this language to their learning, knowledge organisers for each subject discipline will identify the most powerful knowledge pupils must understand and remember, encoding this learning into long-term memory.

The Principles of Mastery: Pupils should be able to maximise their knowledge and understanding by having the opportunity to revisit learning, correct misconceptions, and be challenged even further to deepen their understanding.

The curriculum is therefore organised into three cycles of learning in each academic year (13 weeks). Each cycle contains distinct phases; teach, embed, assess, review, and re-do. At the heart of this cycle is adaptive teaching, based on the findings from cognitive science.

Purposeful, targeted questioning, live marking, and assessment expose what pupils have understood and ensure misconceptions are addressed. Retrieval practice, spaced repetitions, interleaving content, low-stakes quizzing, live marking, and modelling feedback are all important strategies to allow knowledge to be secured into long-term memory.

At the heart of all of this knowledge acquisition is curriculum design. Powerful knowledge within the curriculum becomes independent of socio-historical origins and because this specialised knowledge is not acquired or produced informally in everyday experience, entitlement to it through the curriculum is vital.

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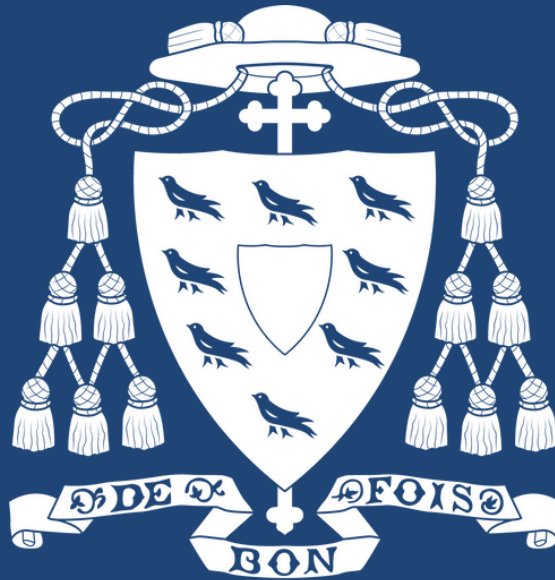
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