

'The curriculum is vibrant. It captures pupils' interests and meets their needs very well.'

Ofsted Report for Western House Academy 2017

The Curriculum at Western House Academy

At Western House Academy, we follow the National Curriculum. Key stage 1 (Year 1 and 2) and Key stage 2 (Years 3-6) follow the Primary National Curriculum. More details on this can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-primary-curriculum>. The Foundation stage (Nursery and Reception) follows the Early Years Framework; more details on this can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework>.

In both Key stage 1 and 2 we teach the following subjects:

- English, Mathematics, Science, Computing, Design and Technology, History, Geography, Music, Art, PSHE, Physical Education, and Religious Education.
- French is taught from Year 1 – Year 6.

In the Foundation stage we teach the areas from the Early Years Curriculum:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development, Communication and Language, Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

Some of the changes in the new Curriculum (2014)

Below are some of the main changes in the new Curriculum:

- Levels have been removed and children are now working towards, working at or working above age related expectations
- The expectations for each year group have been raised
- ICT is now Computing
- There is a big emphasis on children developing knowledge in subjects and having an awareness of the influence they have on the world
- Children need to know, use and spell subject-specific vocabulary

We are committed to ensuring that our children master the skills required to be successful in English and Mathematics and thus these subjects are priorities when allocating teaching time and resources. We believe that the skills learnt in these curriculum areas should be threaded through all subjects taught to encourage a rich, interesting and diverse learning experience. At Western House Academy we operate a 'Project Based Learning' approach each half term where there is a single theme or topic that all curriculum areas feed into. This really helps to bring the learning together and become relevant for the children. It is also a fantastic opportunity to celebrate with parents and other family members as we encourage them to come into school so the children can show them the fantastic learning outcomes they have achieved.

English

Writing

Our aim at Western House Academy is to inspire the children to write and we do this through a scheme called 'Talk for Writing'. 'Talk for Writing' enables children to imitate the key language they need for a particular topic orally before they try reading and analysing it. Through fun activities they rehearse the tune of the language they need, followed by shared writing to show them how to craft their writing. Children are then helped to write in the same style whilst committing a bank of stories to memory.

Reading

Reading is a key life skill and at Western House Academy, our goal is to foster a love of reading in all children. From our newly refurbished library, to visiting authors and publishing our own school book, reading is at the heart of everything we do.

Phonics

Phonics and Reading go hand in hand, with a particular focus in the Early Years and Key Stage 1. We follow the 'Letters and Sounds' scheme which helps the children build a bank of phonic sounds. These are then applied to their reading and can be used when sounding out words to write. There is a statutory Phonics assessment at the end of Year 1 which helps inform the staff of each child's next steps.

Handwriting

The 'Nelson Handwriting Scheme' is used across our school from Reception onwards. It is a whole school approach which has been written in line with 'Letters and Sounds' – the scheme of work we use for teaching Phonics. It begins with pattern practice and fine motor skills work and then moves children onto letter formation and joins.

Home Reading

Sharing books with your child is one of the most useful things you can do and although they will have the opportunity to bring home a variety of books from school, encourage your child to read anything and everything: shop signs, comics, poems, jokes, even the cereal box!

Your child will bring home books including 'colour-coded books', 'reading scheme books', 'library books' and 'non-fiction books'. Often, your child may choose the books. Please respect this choice, even if you don't think the book is suitable. They have chosen the book because it appeals to them in some way and we want to nurture this excitement for reading.

Depending on your child's reading ability and the type of book taken home, decide together which of the following activities is most appropriate:

- You read and discuss the book with your child.
- You and the child read the book at the same time (paired reading).
- Your child reads the book to you.
- Your child reads the book alone.

Make reading at home a daily activity and:

- Talk about the book before you start (title, cover, pictures and expectations).
- Give lots of praise and encouragement.
- Talk about what you have read.
- Ask questions.

- Read fairly slowly so that the child has time to ask questions.

Every child should have a reading diary. We really encourage someone at home to write a comment about your child's reading sessions at home. Children in Year 5 and 6 are encouraged to write a comment about their own reading at home.

Mathematics

Number has a significant priority in the new National Curriculum and as such has a significant priority in our teaching of Mathematics at Western House Academy. We expect our children to be competent in the basic concepts of Mathematics such as the four rules (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division), telling the time and working with money.

We develop the children's arithmetic skills by teaching them structured methods (from our calculation policy) and encouraging them to select the one that they feel most comfortable using. We promote the use of mental calculation to speed up their arithmetic and revise and develop this at every opportunity.

We aim to develop confidence in Mathematics, show our children that Mathematics is of everyday importance to them and that it can be fun. To achieve these aims we use a variety of methods including practical activities, investigations and whole class teaching. We have created opportunities for children to revise their basic Maths skills across the curriculum in subjects such as Science, History and Art (i.e. number skills in History when converting old money, knowledge of Shape, Space and Measure in Art).

Children are set homework in Mathematics. This is to consolidate the weeks learning and possibly introduce next week's topic. You can also help your child by practicing basic Mathematical skills with them, such as learning their tables or practicing the four rules of number - Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Science

Science encourages the children to make sense of the world around them. It allows them to ask questions and find answers. We are promoting the use of Scientific Enquiry skills in all of the lessons that we teach. The new Curriculum has introduced new topics, which we have planned and are currently teaching. These help to build a wider picture of Science and how it influences the world and beliefs of others. In Science lessons at both Key Stages 1 and 2 children are given the opportunity to:

- develop scientific knowledge and conceptual understanding through the specific disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics
- develop understanding of the nature, processes and methods of science through different types of science enquiries that help them to answer scientific questions about the world around them
- are equipped with the scientific knowledge required to understand the uses and implications of science, today and for the future.

Computing

The Computing Curriculum has changed significantly in recent years and is likely to change as the technology we use in everyday life continues to change. The old ICT (Information Communication Technology) framework has now been revamped and includes Computer Science, Digital Literacy and

Information Technology. Western House Academy holds e-safety in high regard in all of these areas, as we see it as a key issue in everyday life. We want to ensure that pupils:

- can understand and apply the fundamental principles and concepts of computer science, including abstraction, logic, algorithms and data representation
- can analyse problems in computational terms, and have repeated practical experience of writing computer programs in order to solve such problems
- can evaluate and apply information technology, including new or unfamiliar technologies, analytically to solve problems
- are responsible, competent, confident and creative users of information and communication technology.

These skills (as well as many other computing skills) are then developed in other curriculum areas. We use ICT as a learning tool in many curriculum subjects and encourage the children to select these tools to support their understanding of a subject. Our teachers are encouraged to include the use of technology, such as laptops and tablets, in their lessons to further enrich the learning of the children in all curriculum areas.

Art

In Art, throughout the school, we explore a range of artists and techniques. Each year the children develop art skills using a variety of tools to support them. In Art we aim for children to:

- produce creative work, exploring their ideas and recording their experiences
- become proficient in drawing, painting, sculpture and other art, craft and design techniques
- evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design
- know about great artists, craft makers and designers, and understand the historical and cultural development of their art forms.

Design and Technology

Our Design and Technology (DT) Curriculum allows children to be creative and understand the processes need to make specific items. We have a broad DT Curriculum looking at cooking, textiles, mechanical systems, structures and electrical systems. In Design and Technology we aim for children to:

- develop the creative, technical and practical expertise needed to perform everyday tasks confidently and to participate successfully in an increasingly technological world
- build and apply a repertoire of knowledge, understanding and skills in order to design and make high-quality prototypes and products for a wide range of users
- critique, evaluate and test their ideas and products and the work of others
- understand and apply the principles of nutrition and learn how to cook

Geography

Geography at Western House Academy allows the children to explore the world beyond Cippenham and Slough. We study a range of places, some similar and some very different to our own homes. There is an expectation for children to learn facts about the world, including continents, countries and capital cities. We explore these in lessons and introduce new topics by revising these.

In Geography we aim for children to:

- develop contextual knowledge of the location of globally significant places – both terrestrial and marine – including their defining physical and human characteristics and how these provide a geographical context for understanding the actions of processes
- understand the processes that give rise to key physical and human geographical features of the world, how these are interdependent and how they bring about spatial variation and change over time
- are competent in the geographical skills needed to:
 - collect, analyse and communicate with a range of data gathered through experiences of fieldwork that deepen their understanding of geographical processes
 - interpret a range of sources of geographical information, including maps, diagrams, globes, aerial photographs and Geographical Information Systems (GIS)
 - communicate geographical information in a variety of ways, including through maps, numerical and quantitative skills and writing at length.

History

History is one of the children's favourite subjects as they love learning about the past. We ensure that the History Curriculum is rich with knowledge of past periods and that we compare the past to present life, taking particular interest in how the past has influenced our lives today. Western House Academy encourages children to have an understanding of chronology and introduce all of our topics by broadening this and comparing to the time from previous learning. We expect our children to:

- know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day: how people's lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world
- know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world: the nature of ancient civilisations; the expansion and dissolution of empires; characteristic features of past non-European societies; achievements and follies of mankind
- gain and deploy a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as 'empire', 'civilisation', 'parliament' and 'peasantry'
- understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analysis
- understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history;

between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history; and between short- and long-term timescales.

We regularly have History themed days throughout the year where children dress up as someone from the period they are studying and spending the day learning about that time period. This is a great opportunity to make links across the curriculum, including Maths, English, Art etc.

Modern Foreign Languages

The language that we teach in Years 1 - 6 at Western House Academy is French. Children begin to explore the language using a variety of games and songs, which they then develop into basic conversation. We aim to provide children with experiences to:

- understand and respond to spoken and written language from a variety of authentic sources
- speak with increasing confidence, fluency and spontaneity, finding ways of communicating what they want to say, including through discussion and asking questions, and continually improving the accuracy of their pronunciation and intonation
- can write at varying length, for different purposes and audiences, using the variety of grammatical structures that they have learnt
- discover and develop an appreciation of a range of writing in the language studied.

Music

Music has a very high profile at our school as we nurture and develop the talents of our children. Music, like sport, allows children to express their talents outside of their classroom and we celebrate these achievements whenever we can. Our Music curriculum links to the topics in each year group. We have a well-resourced Music suite, in which children have the opportunity to explore a wide range of instruments and have access to an acoustic environment that is ideal for teaching a large group. We aim for the children to be able to:

- perform, listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions, including the works of the great composers and musicians
- learn to sing and to use their voices, to create and compose music on their own and with others, have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, use technology appropriately and have the opportunity to progress to the next level of musical excellence
- understand and explore how music is created, produced and communicated, including through the inter-related dimensions: pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure and appropriate musical notations.

Physical Education

Physical Education (PE) is taught in school through six different aspects: Games, Athletics, Dance, Gymnastics, Outdoor/Adventurous Activities and Swimming (Year 3). The children get two hours of PE per week and one hour of that is taught by our specialist PE team. We want to ensure that pupils:

- develop competence to excel in a broad range of physical activities
- are physically active for sustained periods of time
- engage in competitive sports and activities
- lead healthy, active lives

There are many clubs that promote these PE skills, including multi-skills, football, cricket, dodgeball and netball as well as a variety of dance clubs. Western House Academy has been very successful over the years in sporting competitions, winning many trophies in the federation and borough.

Religious Education

At Western House Academy we are proud of the diverse community we serve and all its rich traditions, values and beliefs. To reflect this, we aim to provide an RE syllabus which celebrates all our cultural diversity, whilst remaining within the guidelines laid down by the Local Authority Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. We welcome visits from parents and representatives from the community who would enjoy sharing their faith with us and plan RE related trips and visits to enrich the children's understanding of their own and other's religious experiences. According to Section 25 of the 1944 education Act, parents have the right to withdraw their child from any acts of Religious Worship or instruction. Naturally we respect the wishes of parents in connection with these matters. However, we ask that parents inform the school in writing if they wish to withdraw their child from any aspect of our RE teaching.

Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship

This is a vital area of the child's learning. One of our aims is to prepare the child for life as an adult and how to deal with issues that could upset them. Therefore as part of this programme we teach about such things as personal fitness, hygiene and the importance of correct diet as well as coping with changes, anti-bullying and adapting to different social situations. Our 10 'Western House Values' also feature prominently in these lessons as we endeavour to show and celebrate them in our everyday life.

Sex and Relationship Education

We approach Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in Year 5 and Year 6 as a separate topic from other curriculum areas. There are opportunities for certain areas to link to other subjects such as Science. This is usually through the 'Living Things and their Habitats' topic where reproduction in some plants and animals is explored as well as changes experienced in puberty and gestation periods of animals. In Year 5, SRE focuses on changes in our bodies as we grow up and the relationships we have with others. In Year 6, SRE focuses on reproduction in humans and the process of giving birth. These sessions are delivered through a series of video programmes and taught lessons from teachers. The children are encouraged to ask questions in a safe environment. Parents are given the breakdown of the taught lessons, invited to see the materials, which include the video resources that are used. Parents also have the right to withdraw their child from certain parts of the programme if they wish. We ask that you discuss this with the Principal if you do wish to withdraw your child.

British Values

Another important aspect of ensuring we develop our pupils into successful and well-rounded individuals is to 'prepare pupils positively for life in modern Britain and promoting fundamental British Values'. At Western House Academy, we encourage democracy, voting for many things including class rewards and school councillors. Within the Curriculum we promote British Values by learning about how they were viewed in the past and the present, taking trips and pointing out key points and being positive and supportive to everything we learn about and everyone in the community.

Home Learning

In both Key Stage 1 and 2, children are given home learning tasks to do each week. We believe children should be sharing and celebrating what they have learnt at home and consolidating all their hard work.

- Every year group will be given English and Maths home learning tasks every Friday.
- Year 1, 2 and 3 are expected to hand these tasks in the following Wednesday.
- Year 4, 5 and 6 are expected to hand these tasks in the following Tuesday.
- Spellings will be given out on a Monday and tested the following Monday.

If a child would like additional support with their home learning tasks, there is a 'Home Learning Club' run by members of SLT every Monday lunch time.

There will be occasions when your child brings home additional home learning tasks that link to a topic or project that we are doing in school – these are called 'Project Passport' activities. These are given at the start of a new topic and are linked to a range of different curriculum areas. These activities are designed to enrich further learning at home which will support the learning at school. They are also designed to be fun, engaging and creative for the children – a perfect opportunity to share with those at home!