

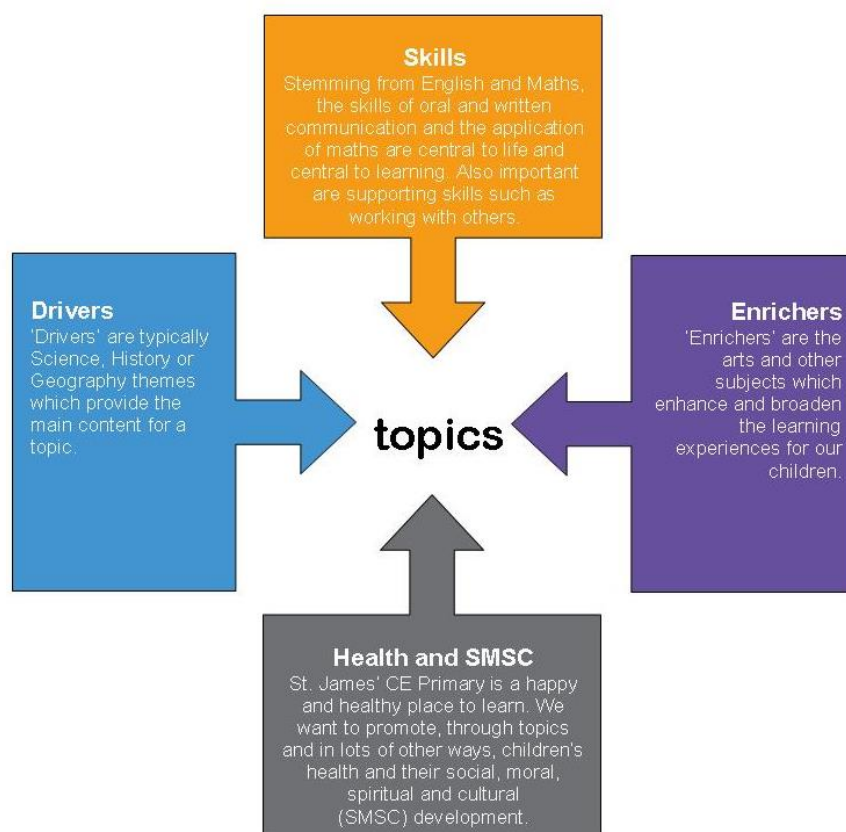
St. James' CE Primary School

Our curriculum topics



We want our teaching and learning to be creative:

creative curriculum = imaginative and purposeful activity + original + with value



We offer a relevant, purposeful, enjoyable curriculum which promotes the **core skills** of oral and written communication; application of maths and the **supporting skills** of information technology; working with others; improving own learning and performance; problem solving; thinking skills.

English and Maths are taught as discrete subjects whilst Science and the foundation subjects are usually taught as part of a topic. The subject matter of a topic is often developed or referred to in English or Maths lessons; for example, in our 'Life' topic where science is the 'driver', children might write an explanation text about the life cycle of a flowering plant or might look at data about animals. Similarly, the skills children learn in English and Maths lessons are practised and applied in topic lessons which give them a sense of purpose and relevance.

Topics are:

inspiring + challenging + relevant + skills-based + creative + enjoyable

We are required to cover The National Curriculum (Department for Education, 2013). We deliver the content in ways which achieve the points listed above. For example, when we teach British history in our Time Travel topic, children learn about themes which interest them; when we teach world history, children work on their own projects which involve independent research. We also ensure we have time for topics which stem not from The National Curriculum but from children's (and teachers') own interests and enthusiasms, or which stem from local / national / international events.

Many of our topics are whole-school ones (excluding Reception, where there is no National Curriculum to follow and where instead, topics evolve based entirely on children's interests). This means children across the school learn with an over-arching theme, such as in our Holidays topic where geography is the 'driver'. Our topics are on a two-year cycle which means teachers in Y1 and Y2, or Y3 and Y4, or Y5 and Y6, can work together and share ideas and activities.

Topics in Year A

2014-15, 2016-17 and further years beginning in an even number

A two-year cycle

The delivery of the curriculum is based on your child's own class: most subjects and skills are taught by the same class teacher. However, many of the topics we've planned are shared across two 'partner classes' in school – Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6. This means that teachers can share ideas and skills when planning and delivering topics, and sometimes means that classes swap teachers or combine to work with other children. To share topics and avoid repeating them each year, we operate a two-year rolling programme of topics, with some topics in 'Year A', some in 'Year B'.

Whole-school topics

St James' CE Primary is very much a community: everyone knows everyone else. This lends itself to supporting and sharing in so many ways, from playing to learning. To build on this, we've planned some topics under the same heading for everyone, from Year 1 to Year 6 noted in the grey cells below). This doesn't mean children will learn the same skills or content regardless of their age, but does mean that children can support each other and share what they've learnt with each other more easily. The 'Life' has lots of biology learning pitched at the appropriate year groups (as set out by the National Curriculum), whilst 'Holidays' focuses on learning about a non-European country in Y1 and Y2, a European country in Y3 and Y4, and a region within North or South America in Y5 and Y6 (again, this follows National Curriculum guidelines).

Topic lengths

Other schools allow teachers to plan topics which vary in length. We prefer to set start and end dates for most of our topics, and we do this by planning topics with a specified length ('Big Topics' last for eight weeks; 'Mini Topics' last for around two – three weeks). This is so that we can ensure a broad and balanced curriculum, and so that our whole-school topics start at the same time – often with a launch assembly – and end at the same time – with some sort of reflective activity to share learning with others. It also means that we can embed whole-school themed weeks into the school year without these interrupting a topic.

So you can support at home, ask your child's teacher when the topics are planned to happen, or look out for dates on our website's calendar.

whole school topic a Big Topic (eight weeks)	Class novel Our class novel topic allows each year group to focus on their own novel. The book, carefully chosen by each class teacher to reflect the needs and interests of the children, will provide opportunities for learning across a range of subjects - Maths, English, Art and many more. This topic aims to show children the links between a text and the wider world, and – importantly - promote a love of reading. Be sure to discuss with your child what's happening in their class novel and what exciting learning they've been doing. You could even buy or loan a copy to read at home (but don't go reading ahead!).
whole school topic a Big Topic (eight weeks)	Time travel (British history) Time Travel is a history-driven topic which will take the children on a journey through early British history (think Stone Age cave dwellers) all the way to the present day Britain and perhaps even into the future! The topic will be taught through a theme. For example, children could learn about how medicine has changed in Britain, or houses, or transport... We believe the best way to teach history is on a theme which captures children's interests, and allows them to consider changes across time – the theme will be carefully selected by the teacher who will have consulted the class. Children will explore British history in this chronological, thematic way three times over the course of their time at St James' CE Primary, but the themes will all be very different and the teacher will guide the learning so that different periods of time will be studied in different amounts of detail. This topic will also be a good opportunity to explore how and why people have immigrated to Britain and the impact this immigration has had.
whole school topic a Mini Topic (two weeks) which happens every year	What's the matter? 'What's the matter?' is a chemistry-based topic where children learn all about materials and their properties. Younger children might begin to explore what objects are made from and why; older children will look at how states of matter can change; from solids (such as ice), to liquids (water, for example), to gas (in this case, water vapour). You can help your child learn more about this topic when cooking (think about what happens to water boiling) or why you see water droplets on the outside of a can straight from the fridge. Children will also ask 'What's the matter?' from a social and emotional point of view, thinking about how they can solve problems.
whole school topic a Mini Topic (two weeks)	Where in the world? 'Where in the world?' will develop the children's geographical knowledge and skills. The world is a big place that is getting more and more accessible but how much do we know about it? We will be swotting up on names of capital cities, countries, continents and oceans. Get out your maps and test each other at home. Who knows all the capital cities in the UK? Can anyone name the five continents? We will also develop map skills so get out there and give each other directions to get from 'A' to 'B'.

Y1 and Y2 topic a Mini Topic (two weeks minimum)	Green fingers (inc seasons) 'Green fingers' focuses on biology and will require children to work scientifically. Our environment is all around us so we feel it is important for the children to know how it works. Children will take responsibility for growing a variety of plants, finding out what they need to survive along the way. Within this, we will look at seasonal changes and how this affects plant growth across the UK. It will enhance your child's learning to take these skills home and see what grows in their own gardens, or invest in a pot plant for your child to look after. Do they know the names of common trees and plants? If not, help them to find out.
Y3 and Y4 topic a Mini Topic (two weeks minimum)	Power (forces) In this short topic on forces, children in Key Stage 2 learn about lots of different forces, such as gravity, friction and air resistance. A good way to describe forces is to think about pushes and pulls. Do lots of experiments at home! Can your child make an effective parachute (where they will learn about gravity pulling down and air resistance pushing up)? Thinking about upthrust from water, which floats best – a ball of Plasticine or the same amount of Plasticine rolled out? What's the best surface for a toy car to move along (here, the force of friction is key)?
Y3 or Y4 topic Mini Topics (two weeks minimum)	Seeing (Y3 only) Have you ever thought about how we see? This short topic will open pupils' eyes to all there is to know about the science of sight. Why can you see your reflection in a mirror? Why can't we see when it's dark? And do carrots really improve your vision at night time? Take this opportunity to look closely at the world around you and discover how things, like a pedestrian crossing, are adapted for those who cannot see.
Y3 and Y4 topic a Mini Topic (two weeks minimum)	Disasters / Environment Depending on the interests of the children or current issues, this topic will explore either natural disasters or environmental issues. Each day, people across the world are affected by natural disasters and cause environmental change. Can our children sympathise with those affected and understand how and why it happens? The children will learn about physical features such as rivers, volcanoes, biomes and many more. To help at home, discuss real events that have happened across the world and encourage them to research and find out for themselves.
Y5 and Y6 topic a Mini Topic (two weeks minimum)	Power (forces) In this short topic on forces, children in Key Stage 2 learn about lots of different forces, such as gravity, friction and air resistance. A good way to describe forces is to think about pushes and pulls. Do lots of experiments at home! Can your child make an effective parachute (where they will learn about gravity pulling down and air resistance pushing up)? Thinking about upthrust from water, which floats best – a ball of Plasticine or the same amount of Plasticine rolled out? What's the best surface for a toy car to move along (here, the force of friction is key)?
Y5 and Y6 topic a Mini Topic (three weeks minimum)	Space As a topic in school, Space has its origins in science, but has the potential to travel deep into the unknown! The science will be mainly physics: learning about the movement of Earth, our moon and other planets relative to the sun. Children will also build on earlier physics learning about light and shadows. This topic will provide opportunities for developing maths and English skills and some out-of-this-world art, too! Children could be supported at home by observing and talking about shadows and how they change over the course of a day. It would really help if they know lengths of key periods of time, and link that to the reasons why: for example, a day lasts 24 hours and it happens as the earth rotates on its own axis – what about seasons or a year? Research the causes of a lunar month, when the moon orbits around the Earth, on the internet – there are lots of good sites (include the word 'primary' to keep the search to some simpler information!).
Y5 and Y6 topic a Mini Topic (two weeks minimum)	Sex and Relationships Education (Y5 only) Learning about relationships happens throughout primary school, and specific sex education happens in Year 5. Elements of the statutory Science National Curriculum act as the starting point for what children learn: <i>Pupils should be taught to describe the changes as humans develop to old age</i> <i>Non-statutory notes and guidance:</i> <i>Pupils should draw a timeline to indicate stages in the growth and development of humans. They should learn about the changes experienced in puberty.</i> <i>Pupils could work scientifically by researching the gestation periods of other animals and comparing them with humans; by finding out and recording the length and mass of a baby as it grows.</i>

Topics in Year B

2015-16, 2017-18 and further years beginning in an odd number

A two-year cycle

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whole school topic a Big Topic (eight weeks)	Holidays Everyone has experienced some sort of holiday, whether it is a holiday abroad, a weekend away in the UK or simply a holiday from school. Geography learning will be key in this whole-school topic, though the children will also enjoy other subjects, too. Maths skills, for example, will be used – children might look at the costs of a holiday, think about flight times and times differences, or learn about exchange rates and currencies. Why not involve your child when planning a get-away: look at holiday brochures and the persuasive language used; challenge your child to write an even more persuasive description; have a go at writing together an 'opposite text' which describes the world's worst tourist destination! Don't forget to explore local tourist attractions like Leeds Art Gallery or the Yorkshire Sculpture Park – and look out for the leaflets used, which can make interesting reads.
whole school topic a Big Topic (eight weeks)	Life Life is all around us, in plants and animals, and comes in all shapes and sizes – it's amazing! In this biology-based topic, we find out how our body works, what all living things have in common and the differences we might notice. Amongst other things, we'll think about why we need bones, why a dolphin is a mammal despite the fact that it lives in the water, and why a healthy diet is important and how drugs can be dangerous. Help your child at home by naming body parts, including the parts inside that you can't see, discussing why you breath hard after exercise and what plants you can see when you're out and about. (During the topic, children throughout the school will learn about relationships although discrete sex education lessons happens in Year 5.)
whole school topic a mini-topic (two weeks)	What's the matter? 'What's the matter?' is a chemistry-based topic where children learn all about materials and their properties. Younger children might begin to explore what objects are made from and why; older children will look at how states of matter can change; from solids (such as ice), to liquids (water, for example), to gas (in this case, water vapour). You can help your child learn more about this topic when cooking (think about what happens to water boiling) or why you see water droplets on the outside of a can straight from the fridge. Children will also ask 'What's the matter?' from a social and emotional point of view, thinking about how they can solve problems.
Y3 and Y4 topic a Mini Topic (two weeks minimum)	Power (electricity) Guaranteed to be one of your child's favourite topics, children learn about electricity and circuits. Children will enjoy exploring what materials are conductors of electricity, allowing electricity to flow through, and other materials which are insulators, which block the flow of electricity. Children will make circuits and then change the brightness of a bulb or the volume of a buzzer. This is an ideal time to practise a sentence construction which is really helpful in Science: <i>The greater the power, the brighter the bulb.</i> Another example is: <i>The more bulbs in the circuit, the dimmer the light.</i> Can you and your child think of more sentences like this for any other area of science – forces, hearing, growing etc?

Y3 or Y4 topic a Mini Topic (two weeks minimum)	Hearing (Y4 only) This biology and physics based topic explores how the ear works and how sound travels. Children will investigate how to create sounds using different objects, developing their skills in working scientifically. To help at home, spend time discussing what you can hear around you and how these sounds can be changed. It is also important to consider those who cannot hear and the reasons why. This topic is a perfect opportunity to practise at home a sentence construction which is really helpful in Science: <i>The tighter the guitar string, the higher the pitch</i> . Conversely, <i>The looser the guitar string, the lower the pitch</i> . Experiment with ways to change pitch or volume at home – use glasses with different amounts of water, or rubber bands, or twang a ruler (and don't forget to create new sentences like the ones shown here).
Y3 and Y4 topic a Mini Topic (four weeks minimum)	World history Find out about ancient civilisations and how their successes and failures influence the world we live in today. The world has an incredibly rich history, full of mystery and excitement. This topic is for children in Key Stage 2. It will develop their own independent research skills as they take control of what they discover, sharing their fascinating findings in a variety of ways. What amazing discoveries did the Greeks give us? What sweet treat did the Olmecs discover? Help at home by visiting local museums and reading lots of non-fiction books – this will help develop children's natural passion for finding out fascinating facts.
Y5 and Y6 topic a Mini Topic (two weeks minimum)	Power (electricity) Guaranteed to be one of your child's favourite topics, children learn about electricity and circuits. Children will enjoy exploring what materials are conductors of electricity, allowing electricity to flow through, and other materials which are insulators, which block the flow of electricity. Children will make circuits and then change the brightness of a bulb or the volume of a buzzer. This is an ideal time to practise a sentence construction which is really helpful in Science: <i>The greater the power, the brighter the bulb</i> . Another example is: <i>The more bulbs in the circuit, the dimmer the light</i> . Can you and your child think of more sentences like this for any other area of science – forces, hearing, growing etc?
Y5 and Y6 topic a Mini Topic (three weeks minimum)	Space As a topic in school, Space has its origins in science, but has the potential to travel deep into the unknown! The science will be mainly physics: learning about the movement of Earth, our moon and other planets relative to the sun. Children will also build on earlier physics learning about light and shadows. This topic will provide opportunities for developing maths and English skills and some out-of-this-world art, too! Children could be supported at home by observing and talking about shadows and how they change over the course of a day. It would really help if they know lengths of key periods of time, and link that to the reasons why: for example, a day lasts 24 hours and it happens as the earth rotates on its own axis – what about seasons or a year? Research the causes of a lunar month, when the moon orbits around the Earth, on the internet – there are lots of good sites (include the word 'primary' to keep the search to some simpler information!).
Y5 topic a Mini Topic (two weeks minimum)	Sex and Relationships Education (Y5 only) Learning about relationships happens throughout primary school, and specific sex education happens in Year 5. Elements of the statutory Science National Curriculum act as the starting point for what children learn: <i>Statutory requirement:</i> <i>Pupils should be taught to describe the changes as humans develop to old age</i> <i>Non-statutory notes and guidance:</i> <i>Pupils should draw a timeline to indicate stages in the growth and development of humans. They should learn about the changes experienced in puberty.</i> <i>Pupils could work scientifically by researching the gestation periods of other animals and comparing them with humans; by finding out and recording the length and mass of a baby as it grows.</i>
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