



28 January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope it has been a great week for you and that there are some nice things planned for the weekend.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Each morning we have used tutorial time to explore material that relates to Holocaust Memorial Day (yesterday). I began the week with a whole-school assembly that explained what is meant by the Holocaust. This led into a daily exploration of survivors' testimonies so that their individual experiences could be compared and understood, but also to act as a springboard to consider some major questions around blame, responsibility, law and courage. We drew on the [excellent resources provided by the BBC](#) and these are shared with you should you wish to revisit the themes with your children.

Why We Teach What We Teach

Being responsible for a whole-school theme is both a massive pressure and a huge privilege. When deciding what to shine a light upon, the questions a teacher asks are as follows: What *must* they all know? What should they think about? What should they be left with? What should I focus on and what should I leave out? All teachers across the country are devoting more and more time to asking why we teach certain topics, books, poems, music, sports, skills - and not others.

Why Do They Learn In The Way That They Learn?

The primary skill of every teacher is deciding exactly *how* to deliver the curriculum, including the best ways to adapt lessons and resources to meet the needs of all learners. This is the most challenging part of our work and a skill that can only ever be honed as opposed to mastered. You will be familiar with our teaching and learning philosophy that is best described as knowledge-rich, but centres on careful task design, clear and succinct explanations, comparative modelling, and extended practice. What we call 'high-TEMP' teaching and learning.

Why?

Every tutorial theme, lesson, unit of work or course has to be much more than a means to the crude end of passing an examination! We know *what* we need *to teach*, and we know *how* we want your children *to learn*. But are we always clear enough in our own minds about what we want children to get *from* their time at school? Beyond exam results and getting to the next stage in their lives, what is it that my colleagues hope to teach, or your children to learn, that transcends the relatively short-term pursuit of grades, and strives for something more long-term, or everlasting?

Continued...

Our Curriculum Intent

At CNS, we seek a coherent curriculum. By that, we mean that we wish to avoid your children studying a bunch of subjects in isolation; that do not contain golden threads of meaning and purpose with all their other studies. This goal has led to the development of our 'curriculum intent'. We have avoided a long and sprawling text and tried to capture what our teaching and learning is about or what it always needs to be about as follows:

*All students will experience a broad and balanced curriculum that fuels their **curiosity** and nurtures a **compassionate**, inclusive and hopeful outlook on humanity and the future.*

Our curriculum is ambitious for all children. It follows a carefully laid pathway that deliberately sequences, accumulates and revisits core and disciplinary knowledge and skills.

*We want all students to be lifelong explorers and creators of undiscovered knowledge. We believe this will happen if they possess the **courage** and confidence to learn, to remember, and to make connections on their own.*

*We want students to **creatively** express their uniqueness through the things they say, write, compose, sing, design, make, perform or solve. This secures the education and qualifications that gives students the freedom to choose their own future and their own destinations.*

You will notice the emphasis on our four core values that seek all students to embrace compassionate and courageous hearts, with curious and creative minds. We choose to promote a 'hopeful outlook on humanity' with the ultimate goal securing every student's 'freedom to choose their own future'.

Holocaust Memorial Themes

And so this is why my decisions about what to cover and what to leave to one side are easier to reach with a clear curriculum intent. The decision to focus on the stories of survivors and how the virtues of courage and compassion stood up to the forces of darkness, is in keeping with our desire to shine a light on the truth of our world, but without the bleak narrative that is all too easy to fall into in a world where bad news sells.

It Ain't [Just] What You Do, It's The Way That You Do It...

In the weeks and months ahead, we are going to work even harder to communicate and explain why we choose to do the things we do at CNS. This applies to the curriculum, but also everything else from the way your children learn to why we set homework. Also, why is it that we insist on high standards of appearance, or are fussy about attendance and time-keeping? Why do we read at the start of lessons and why do we recognise and reward the things that we do. Everything we do ought to have meaning and value.

I hope you will forgive me for mentioning COVID *last* today. You will be aware that face coverings are no longer required, but students are free to wear them if they wish. Meanwhile, please continue with the twice-weekly home testing followed by uploading your results to [our Google Form](#). Positive cases continue to be low and falling (amongst students and staff).

Have a great weekend!

Yours faithfully



Barry Doherty, Headteacher