

## What is my child being taught in the curriculum?

### CURRICULUM

#### Content

Prior to 1988, schools chose their own curriculum content. In 1988, the first National Curriculum was introduced, prescribing what schools should teach. Content has evolved over time to meet the changing needs of the workplace – the use of technology and the way it is used in schools is an example of the most rapid change. Academies and free schools are now able to design their own curricula, although for all schools this is largely determined by test and exam requirements at key points in education. School websites and prospectuses should carry detailed curriculum information.

#### Underpinning values

School curricula often serve political priorities. As an example, since the Blair government determined that education was seminal to improving the struggling economy, academic success in the service of growing a strong global economy and securing personal happiness has become a key driver of our education service.

The narrow focus on passing exams has raised concerns about how students are taught and the fact that there is little room for activities that support personal growth and development. Joy has drained out of learning:

PE is used as a means of combating obesity or producing the next batch of Olympic stars and music is seen as a means of enhancing intelligence. Science and maths are recommended over arts as a means of securing the most lucrative employment. Everything has become annexed to exam grades and everything has a price.

One government response has been to introduce character education into schools to instil resilience and grit into students. This has not been without its own concerns: the growth of military ethos groups in schools gives concern to pacifists, in particular Quakers, while it is up to each school whether it instils resilience and grit in the context of a moral code, or merely for the purposes of enhancing academic achievement.

Schools are also reflections of dominant cultural narratives and secular thinking, materialist values, individualism and consumerism pervade the curriculum. There is also pressure for

*'Schools are reflections of dominant cultural narratives'*

learning communities to be neutral spaces and liberal secular thinking is often accepted as a fair and reasonable compromise in a pluralistic society, even by Christians.

*‘What might learning look like when it is rooted in love, faith and hope?’*

### **A new way – a Christian perspective**

An international partnership of teachers from Australia, the UK and the USA has developed a distinctively Christian approach to teaching and learning, called What if Learning. Because everything that happens in classrooms is affected by the teacher’s understanding of

life, Christian teachers can develop distinctively Christian strategies for teaching and learning. What if languages were taught to welcome the stranger rather than to survive as a tourist–consumer? What is maths was about sharing, rather than transactional models designed to increase economic wellbeing? What might learning look like when it is rooted in love, faith and hope? As a parent, you could discuss your child’s learning using this new way of seeing.

For more information:

- What if Learning – A Christian way of teaching  
[www.whatiflearning.co.uk](http://www.whatiflearning.co.uk)