



# ST FRANCIS SCHOOL

## OUR LEARNING ETHOS

The purpose of this document is to outline our school's Learning Ethos so that there is a mutual understanding by parents of the way their children are learning and how their children will be prepared for successful entry to senior school and beyond.



It is our primary responsibility at St Francis to nurture each individual so that they can develop their own character. Their biggest challenge is learning how to interact with others, therefore life skills are important.

A further purpose is to prepare pupils for their future education and career. The world of

work is changing rapidly and it is difficult for us to predict what the future workplace will look like, but what we can predict is that our pupils will require a range of transferable skills to allow them to be successful and adaptable in their careers.

I wonder, if you are an employer, what you look for when recruiting new staff? Do you look solely at the list of a potential employee's exam grades, or do you look for skills and qualities which will ensure that they complement your business needs? Certainly an adequate level of knowledge and ability can be confirmed by examination results, but senior schools, universities and places of work are changing their focus to see additionally what strengths and skills an individual has to offer to enhance their environment. 'Character' (an individual's 'soft skills') and resilience are seen as equally or more important than exam results.

In senior school terms, this is shown through a change in the way pupils are assessed for entry. The traditional route of leaving the confirmation of place to the end of Year 8 on the basis of performance in the 13+ Common Entrance in June is very much in the past: senior schools now undertake pre-assessment tests at an earlier stage, usually in

Year 7 (or even in Year 6) for a 13+ entry into Year 9. The type of test is also changing. Rather than relying solely on standardised tests in the core subjects and reasoning, senior schools are increasingly using more practical assessments to see how individuals perform in groups, so that their skills and learning attributes can be identified.

As a forward-thinking prep school, we want to ensure that we are at the forefront of educational thinking and practice. We want to ensure that today we are preparing our pupils in the best way possible for their lives now and in the future. We want to ensure



that we empower our pupils to be independent thinkers and life-long learners, to have intellectual curiosity, to have the tools to reflect on their own learning, at the same time as developing knowledge and breadth.

Education is so much more than simply 'training' young individuals to remember knowledge for the purposes of passing an exam. A modern, effective education involves pupils being provided with and nurtured through learning opportunities and experiences, rather than being taught in a very traditional and knowledge-focused way. Our aim is for our pupils to have the confidence to approach a situation and use their experience to determine how to respond to it. More than this, it is about having the resilience to keep trying different

approaches until they are successful and lessons have been learned. Also key is the chance to reflect on their experiences to work out what lessons they have learned and to consider how they can be applied successfully in the future. We all learn best through challenge, but need support to make the most of each and every learning situation.

For some time we have been developing a core set of skills which we want our pupils to develop during their time in school, both inside and outside the classroom. We have provided opportunities in different scenarios for our pupils to gain a greater understanding of the skills, to have a go at developing them in a variety of situations, and to reflect on what they had learned about themselves as individual learners. The range of activities shows that the development of skills is not just restricted to what happens inside the classroom: just as important are the opportunities outside the classroom such as on school trips, through drama productions, through co-curricular activities and events, and through participation in pupil committees. Last term's CLICK Fortnight is an example of this.

The core skills are summarised by 'CLICK':

Communication	Collaboration
Leadership	Learning & Thinking
Independence	Improving after Reviewing
Courtesy	Courtesy
Kindness	Kindness

Over the course of the last two years, the teaching staff at St Francis have been exploring and implementing a pupil-centred style of education, which balances the



learning of skills with the knowledge to help nurture the individual. The Pre-Senior Bacculaureate (which has no connections to the International Bacculaureate) supports St Francis and other prep schools in the development of this modern learning ethos approach of education, at the same time as offering closer collaboration between prep schools and senior schools to strengthen the transfer from one to the other. Details of the Pre-Senior Bacculaureate can be found on their website at [psbacc.org](http://psbacc.org).

This will be further developed this academic year through regular opportunities for older pupils to spend time individually or in small groups with their Form Tutors to focus on their learning. Time will be set aside for each individual pupil to discuss their learning strengths as well as what opportunities are required for making progress in areas at which they do not excel so easily. This coaching is a key aspect of the PSB approach and can only enhance the provision for and the development of our individual pupils.

### **Summary of St Francis School's Learning Ethos**

At St Francis School, we are focused on the development of pupils as:

- Flexible and adaptable learners
- Independent thinkers
- Intellectually curious
- Reflective learners
- Resilient learners

This will be achieved through:

- Developing each individual's CLICK skills, inside and outside the classroom
- Promoting a learning focus rather than teaching focus
- The development of skills rather than constant assessments
- Nurturing, especially through regular coaching sessions with Form Tutors
- Developing knowledge through long-term memory and not just short-term memory
- Being aspirational and involving all in managing challenge
- Sharing of best practice with colleagues in prep schools and senior schools

### **What the senior schools say:**

#### **Dauntsey's School (Jo Sagers, Registrar):**

"It is refreshing to see the St Francis approach."

#### **Marlborough College (Julia Hodgson, Director of Admissions):**

"We welcome the collaborative, skills-based approach of the PSB."

#### **St Edward's, Oxford (Matthew Albrighton, Deputy Head Academic):**

"The adoption of the rigorous but adaptable framework of the PSB strikes me as a sensible step forward in offering a 21<sup>st</sup> century education."

#### **St Mary's Calne (Diana Harrison, Deputy Headmistress):**

"St Mary's Calne believes strongly in innovative and dynamic teaching as opposed to teaching to the test and we would, therefore, support any prep school in their desire to do the same."

#### **Warminster School (Mark Sully, Deputy Head Academic):**

"As a school we are just as interested in the soft skills that a pupil has learnt: resilience, risk-taking, independence."

### **What the IAPS (Independent Association of Preparatory Schools) says:**

David Hanson, recently retired CEO of IAPS, is a great supporter of the PSB.

"The PSB embodies the best in primary education. It provides a framework that gives teachers and leaders the confidence to offer their pupils a curriculum experience that has real depth and breadth and an assessment methodology that celebrates success. And both pupils and teachers enjoy it. But, most importantly, the PSB demonstrates that by educating the whole child, academic progress and achievement is not compromised, but is actually enhanced."