

English Martyrs' Catholic School

Sociology Curriculum Statement

Key Message – Intention:

The Sociology Department aims to deliver a great worth of education and provides students with an opportunity to understand and explain human behaviour and the workings of society; past and present. Sociology has helped to form Social policies that the government has implemented in order to close various gaps and issues in society. Our curriculum has, at its grassroots, the confidence that students should be taught indispensable knowledge, methodological processes and the utilisation of the Sociology discipline. This curriculum is a broad one, which encounters theoretical and practical aspects and is a platform for students to gain the aptitude to view all societies from different Sociological perspectives, but also, to critically investigate society from all angles such as the social, cultural and political. Through the construction of key foundation knowledge, theory, studies and concepts, the students are stimulated to recognise the power of coherent enlightenments and develop a sense of belonging about the society they live in, which then supports them to make conversant decisions in and for their future. Essential to success both in Sociology and life beyond post-16 education, is the development of a growth mind set in students, no student is determined or labelled by their expected grade or prior attainment. A growth mind set is nurtured in students to encourage them to challenge themselves and as the English Martyrs' school prayer says help them find their true vocation in life, find happiness in themselves and bring happiness to others.

I. Sequential Approach – Implementation:

The Sociology curriculum is one that takes an upwards spiral journey. A spiral curriculum is one which revisits topics, themes and knowledge throughout the course. 'A spiral curriculum does not just repeat knowledge but it deepens meaning with each successive encounter building on the previous one' (Bruner, 1960). This is beneficial to students as they build their confidence up in order to gain knowledge, application and analysis capabilities to the very highest demand within the curriculum, where they must draw upon synoptic links from all of their topics. They must investigate the knowledge they are taught from the curriculum and consider how it can effect society beyond the classroom.

When students arrive to learn Sociology in Year 12 at English Martyrs Sixth Form we aim to engage them right away in the hope for them to become inquisitive. This is by introducing students to the knowledge of the fundamental, main founders of Sociological theory such as Functionalism, Marxism, Interactionism, Feminism and Post-modernism. These are taught primarily, as students need to feel confident in applying them to the topics within the curriculum. As this is a new subject at post-16 it means all students start at the same point and then go forward and individualise their knowledge through applications they can relate to.

All topics are from the AQA syllabus and are very current to our students and therefore there is an accessible approach for them to show clear, concise application to these topics and gain a real connection with them.

The induction of theory is shortly followed by the topic of Families & Households where students will learn about primary socialisation and the role of the family within society. As students have been introduced to Sociological theory and empirical research they then have the assurance to learn about how these studies are constructed by learning the different research methods and gaining the ability to evaluate them. The next topic that is taught is the role of education within society, again very relevant to students as they have just completed compulsory schooling and therefore discussions are often triggered through their own experiences. This topic allows learners to look at how a student's identity may impact on school achievement such as social class, ethnicity and gender. This part of the curriculum enriches the catholic ethos that everyone should be given the same opportunity.

The methods in context topic is delivered last to the students as it requires them to use their knowledge, skills and application of both the education topic and research methods. Taking all this with them into Year 13 with an additional two topics – mass media, a very influential factor to students and therefore the students have a natural flare as they are 'the' society where media is such a big influence. Crime and deviance and some more 'top up'

knowledge on theory and methods is the last part of the curriculum they engage with that is a part of the Sociology curriculum.

2. Teaching Approaches – Implementation:

Teaching approaches in Sociology are based on the golden principles of English Martyrs' teaching and learning policy. The topics covered in the curriculum mean that the Sociology pedagogy is taught and delivered in a variety of ways. This is to keep the students fully engaged and also to consider how they learn best.

As a spiral curriculum approach is taken retrieval practise occurs naturally, especially in the second year where students are required to make synoptic links but also through the implementation of 'weekly assessments' where students answer all types of past exam questions. These are often from previous topics covered in the winter term of/or the previous year, this is vital for a curriculum that is assessed in a linear format. Opportunities to engage with prior knowledge are also provided through lesson starters e.g. short knowledge quizzes, these are essential as in order for information to be transferred from short term memory to long term memory it must be rehearsed or engaged with at a deeper level. Knowledge acquired during a lesson is also reiterated at the end of the lesson through short plenaries e.g. short mark questions, according to the serial position effect information presented at the beginning and end of a lesson is important as it is this information which is most likely to be retained. Therefore it is essential that each lesson starts and ends with an activity which builds on previous knowledge.

Group work is also often practised within Sociology, for example a common use would be the, 'market place' type – where the work is well structured and all students involved take a role and engage with the task.

Students often experience the dual coding strategy where a common routine is for students to have the resource on a hand out, aided by a visual PowerPoint that is read through aloud. The purpose of the handout is to ensure knowledge is consolidated and can be looked back on for revision. When information is presented it is also chunked into small manageable steps for students, this is in accordance with cognitive load theory, it is important to not create extraneous load as this is not conducive to creating long term memories.

Modelling and scaffolding are also important tools in Sociology. High quality exemplar answers are provided to students and exam strategy is often modelled. Scaffolds for challenging questions are also provided. These aid students understanding of how to achieve success in Sociology. Providing whole class feedback is also helpful in this in addition to WWW and EBI which is taken from a coding sheet which all students keep in their folders and are familiar with.

Additionally, students are often given the opportunity in class to link their knowledge to wider research and wider society. Lessons are often drawn on news articles, policy outlines etc. Targeted teacher questioning using blooms taxonomy is also used here and 'thinking time' is built in for students, this allows students to be appropriately challenged and for their understanding to be checked.

Debating and opening the floor out to students is a common theme within Sociology lessons, this is due to the students needing to grasp that all opinions and perspectives are effective for those that hold them. Analysing and articulating an argument from different perspectives are also talents that students develop and take from their KS4 English and History curriculum.

3. Development of Whole child – Impact:

The study of A level Sociology must focus on contemporary society. Studying Sociology intends to foster the development of critical and reflective thinking with a respect for social diversity. It aims to provide an awareness of the importance of social structure and social action in explaining social issues. Students must be encouraged to develop their own sociological awareness through active engagement with the contemporary social world. Specifically within the curriculum students are encouraged to become independent and make independent inquiries, this is often completed through them finding current evidence behind the structure of societies.

The Sociology curriculum is imperative for young adults in understanding the society they will be transitioning into once they finish their journey at post-16 and what role they will take within it, but they also learn about past societies in order for them to understand how and why their society is shaped. The workings and processes of the political agency in society and its role are often discussed amongst Sociology students within the lesson/topics which again is vital for them to be aware of and recognise how they can be involved in the shaping of their society.

Sociology is a platform for social and cultural implications where, through discussion students are learning about each other's backgrounds and identities. This links to the catholic tradition on which English Martyrs is based on – 'God teaches us to treat with dignity and respect and learn to love our neighbours' (CAFOD).

British culture is something else that is conversed within the curriculum and recognising that our culture is fluid, yet anchored with core tradition and themes. In order to understand our culture, students get to compare it to other types of societies and appreciate how they differ globally.

4. Focus for change:

- Use of data to focus on more recalling of knowledge on Paper 2.
- To continue and maintain the routine and stimulating environment – so there will be an implementation of more regular folder checks.
- Teaching research methods alongside methods in context. This has been identified through trends in data.