C Cubed Points the Way Forward

As The Leys and St Faith's come together to create a new educational journey for pupils across the Foundation, one innovative programme is already providing a glimpse of what that future will look like.

Over the past year, pupils from both schools have been taking part in C Cubed, an academic enrichment programme built around three core principles**: Connection, Curiosity and Creativity**. Open to all pupils who wish to take part, the initiative has brought together young people from Years 6 to 8 to explore challenging ideas, engage in meaningful discussion and develop the confidence to think independently. In doing so, it has demonstrated how academic ambition can be made accessible, enjoyable and inspiring for every learner.

Originally conceived by colleagues from both schools, C Cubed has grown through a highly collaborative partnership between staff at The Leys and St Faith's. For those involved, one of its greatest strengths has been the opportunity to share expertise across age groups and educational phases, creating richer experiences for pupils while helping to shape a shared academic culture across the Foundation.

The programme was inspired by the long-established Head's Society and Academic Society at The Leys and aims to introduce younger pupils to the excitement of intellectual exploration beyond the classroom. Rather than focusing on curriculum content alone, C Cubed encourages pupils to grapple with big questions, consider different perspectives and develop the critical thinking skills that will serve them throughout their education and beyond.

Its inaugural event challenged pupils to explore the relationship between humans and animals. Working collaboratively in discussion groups, they examined philosophical, ethical and scientific perspectives before presenting and defending their ideas. The emphasis throughout was not on finding the "right" answer but on cultivating curiosity, thoughtful debate and intellectual confidence.

Since then, the programme has continued to grow. A Foundation-wide essay competition for Year 7 and 8 pupils has encouraged participants to tackle demanding questions ranging from the nature of wealth to the purpose of scientific enquiry. The competition has revealed remarkable curiosity, originality and ambition, with several pupils entering for a second year and building on lessons learned from their previous experience. Their willingness to revisit challenging academic tasks reflects the resilience, confidence and genuine love of learning that C Cubed seeks to foster.

Another highlight saw Year 7 pupils from St Faith's and Moulton House collaborate in a bespoke escape room challenge built around a space mission. Working in teams, pupils applied logical reasoning, problem-solving skills and creative thinking to complete a series of interconnected challenges. The event demonstrated how intellectual development can flourish when rigorous thinking is combined with engaging, hands-on experiences.

Alongside these larger events, C Cubed has introduced a programme of termly lunchtime talks led by Sixth Form pupils from The Leys. Selecting their own topics and crafting thought-provoking questions, the student speakers have led discussions with confidence and maturity, encouraging younger pupils to challenge assumptions, debate respectfully and develop independent perspectives. Recent topics have included: *Should winning come at any cost*? *What does a perfect society look like*? and *How free are you*?

These sessions have proved particularly popular, attracting strong voluntary attendance from pupils eager to continue their learning beyond the classroom. They also provide a powerful example of the opportunities for pupil leadership and cross-phase learning that are central to the all-through Foundation vision. Leys Sixth Form pupils have consistently commented on the quality of thinking, self-confidence and willingness to engage shown by the younger pupils, while themselves gaining valuable experience as mentors and role models.

The programme's success can already be seen in the skills and behaviours pupils are developing. Staff have noted increasing confidence in discussion, greater willingness to engage with uncertainty and a growing ability to present and defend ideas with clarity. Feedback from scholarship interviews suggests that pupils are becoming more adept at articulating complex arguments and thinking flexibly when faced with unfamiliar questions. These qualities, often described as academic courage, are increasingly valuable not only within education but also in the wider world.

For Foundation leaders, these experiences have reinforced the opportunities created when pupils are given access to a broader academic community and a richer programme of enrichment.

Alex Welby, Head of Academic Scholarship at The Leys, said: "C Cubed has shown what is possible when we bring pupils together around ideas that genuinely excite and challenge them. What has been particularly encouraging is that these opportunities are open to everyone. We want every pupil to know that their ideas matter, that they are capable of engaging with complex questions and that intellectual curiosity is something to be celebrated. The quality of discussion, the enthusiasm for learning and the willingness to explore difficult ideas have been

remarkable."

Laura Davies, Deputy Head Academic at St Faith's, said: "One of the most rewarding aspects of C Cubed has been seeing pupils discover that learning doesn't stop at the edge of the curriculum. They have embraced opportunities to think independently, debate respectfully and explore different perspectives. The programme demonstrates how academic rigour and intellectual curiosity can be developed in a way that is engaging, collaborative and accessible for all pupils."

Looking ahead, the programme continues to evolve. Plans are already being explored for a dedicated critical thinking event for Year 8 pupils, while the success of C Cubed is also prompting discussion about how similar initiatives might support future outreach and partnership work. Most significantly, it has begun to establish a model for meaningful engagement between pupils at different stages of their educational journey.

The new Middle School will serve pupils aged 11 to 13, building on the strengths of both schools and creating a distinctive environment in which scholarship, creativity, collaboration and intellectual challenge are woven throughout everyday school life. Programmes such as C Cubed provide a blueprint for that future, demonstrating how pupils can learn from one another, benefit from shared expertise and develop the confidence to engage with increasingly sophisticated ideas as they progress through the Foundation.

If the merger represents a bold vision for the future, C Cubed offers compelling evidence of what that future can achieve: a genuinely connected educational community where every pupil is encouraged to be curious, think deeply and embrace the joy of learning.

What began as an enrichment initiative has become something much more significant. It is helping to establish the culture of the future Foundation: inclusive, intellectually ambitious and rooted in the belief that every pupil can thrive when given the opportunity to explore, question and discover.