

Ascend Learning Trust

CURRICULUM POLICY

POLICY PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This Policy outlines the Trust's approach to curriculum design and delivery in Academies. This document sets out our policy with regard to the provision of a high-quality, aspirational curriculum in each of our academies.

The curriculum is at the heart of our strategy of 'Excellence in Education'.

The curriculum represents what each of our Academy stands for and what it believes its students should learn. Put simply, the provision of an outstanding curriculum in each of our Academies is the single most important thing we can do to raise standards and aspirations, unlock potential and drive social mobility.

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

1.1. The curriculum is all the planned activities that are organised in order to promote learning and personal growth and development. It includes not only the formal requirements of the National Curriculum, but also the range of extra-curricular activities that the Academy organises in order to enrich the experience of pupils. It also includes the 'hidden curriculum', or what the children learn from the way they are treated and expected to behave. We aim to teach pupils how to grow into positive, responsible people, who can work and co-operate with others while developing knowledge and skills, so that they achieve their true potential.

1.2. Each Academies an environment for high-quality learning at the heart of its community. We promote compassion, ambition and respect and expect high standards in all aspects of Academy life.

1.3. Our aim is to meet the needs of young people by preparing them for adult and working life in the 21st century.

1.4. This Curriculum Policy sets out our vision with respect to the purpose, organisation and aims of the curriculum. The curriculum is central to ensuring the highest possible expectations for the pupils, staff and communities we serve. It is at the heart of our core purpose and strategy, 'Excellence in Education'. In this document, the term curriculum is used with two meanings in mind.

Firstly, to mean the curriculum in terms of the offer of subjects, qualifications and courses which our pupils follow. It is also used to mean the substance of pupils' education. That is, the actual knowledge, skills and understanding, including how this is chosen and sequenced, which we expect our pupils to learn during their time in school. The intended meaning in each case will usually be clear from the context.

1.5. The educational vision and curriculum design for our Academy curriculum recognises that:

- Although the pace of change in society and the workplace is increasing, the foundations of a strong education remain. We believe that all our pupils deserve a curriculum that provides them with secure and flexible knowledge across a broad range of subject disciplines;
- Young people have, and will have increasingly, greater access to information and learning material independently of school. However, formal education remains the most important way in which young people gain the knowledge and ‘cultural capital’ they need to thrive and succeed in their future lives;
- Curriculum delivery should involve the flexible use of all adults, as well as teachers. These could include support staff, graduates, artists, sports people and people from industry and business to support curriculum delivery.

1.6. Our Curriculum Policy is based on the following aims and principles, to:

- have pupils at its heart, putting their interests above those of the institution;
- have a curriculum that is fit for purpose, and which meets the needs of all our pupils;
- be a centre of excellence in curriculum design and development, supporting highly effective learning and teaching;
- prepare all pupils for a successful adult and working life in a 21st century global society;
- at least match national standards in achievement, attainment and progression;
- be committed to excellence and continuous improvement;
- nurture the talents of all and celebrate success;
- support effective transition between primary and secondary schools and academies;
- involve the community and other stakeholders;
- to ensure it complies fully with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, particularly in respect of pupils with protected characteristics as defined by the same Act.

2. SCOPE

2.1. The Policy applies to all leaders, teaching and professional services support staff.

3. LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

3.1. The Funding Agreement for each Academy will indicate what should be provided in the Curriculum. In addition, each Academy's website will also show the details of the curriculum provided, including – as a minimum – the long-term (or 'high-level') curriculum plan for each subject.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1. The Academy curriculum is underpinned by the values that we hold at our Trust and in each Academy. The curriculum will inspire and challenge all learners and prepare them for their future lives. The Trust and each Academy aim to develop a coherent, well-sequenced and challenging curriculum that helps all young people to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

4.2. ALT wants all of our pupils to realise their full potential through our values of:

- Excellence in Education through compassion, ambition and respect;
- Valuing the whole child as much as academic outcomes;
- Placing each Academy at the heart of its community.

4.3. The curriculum should help young people to:

- learn well, be challenged, achieve high standards and make good progress
- develop a breadth of knowledge and understanding that underpins a range of skills, such as problem solving, analysis, evaluation and communication, and helps them to become confident, resilient and life-long learners.
- have and be able to use 'basic' or core skills and knowledge fluently and confidently, including literacy, numeracy and computing skills
- enjoy and be committed to learning, in school and beyond
- value their learning outside of the curriculum and link this to their learning in the taught curriculum.
- be creative and to develop their own thinking and ideas;
- understand their developing world, including how their environment and society have changed over time;
- understand Britain's cultural heritage and history;
- value, celebrate and understand the history, heritage and traditions of communities and ethnic groups (for example, BAME groups) who attend our academies
- be positive citizens in society, to contribute and thrive;

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- have an awareness of their own spiritual development, and to understand moral values, such as the difference between right and wrong;
 - understand the importance of truth and fairness, so that they grow up committed to equal opportunities for all;
 - have respect for themselves and high self-esteem, and to be able to live and work cooperatively with others;
 - access where, applicable, a post-16 curriculum which is not restricted by the curriculum offer from the Academy alone but incorporates other schools/colleges which may be in partnership with the Academy.

5. ORGANISATION AND PLANNING

5.1. The Trust's overall curriculum intent is defined as:

Our schools have highly ambitious curricula which are coherently planned and sequenced to ensure cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills can develop over time. This will lead to students building greater understanding and seeking meaning from their curriculum experiences.

The knowledge, understanding and skills developed will allow young people to achieve Excellence in Education as well as to understand themselves and others. This sense of self will lead to a greater understanding of community and their sense of place and belonging in the world so they can demonstrate respect and compassion. Ultimately we seek to produce independent lifelong learners who have self-agency and are empowered to change the world.

Literacy is a 'golden thread' that runs through each school's curriculum ensuring that all young people can:

- Develop a love of reading; Write accurately and succinctly for a variety of audiences and purposes;
- Speak eloquently and confidently.

The curriculum should be designed and adapted to meet the needs of all pupils especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who have experienced socio-economic disadvantage.

5.2. Each Academy should devise their own over-arching curriculum intent statement which clearly articulates the lofty goals and vision for their curriculum across the Academy. This curriculum intent statement should have synergy with the Trust Curriculum Statement above.

5.3. Each subject sets out its long term (or 'high-level') plan for each year group. This shows the content to be taught across a series of units or topics in each term, and to which groups of pupils. Each subject area will keep these plans under continuous review.

5.3. The next layer is subject medium-term plans. In these the specific skills, knowledge and vocabulary which we want pupils to learn, and how this these are sequenced and organised, is set out. These plans also include detail about how knowledge and skills will be assessed, and how pupils who require support to access the curriculum successfully, will be supported. They will also show how learning will be deepened for higher-attaining pupils.

5.4. Short-term plans are those that teachers may write on a weekly or daily basis. Teachers will use these to set out the specific learning and assessment for each session, and to identify what resources and activities to be used in the lesson.

6. OUR CURRICULUM PRINCIPLES

6.1. The curriculum will remain as broad as possible, for as long as possible. Our curriculum does not narrow pupils' experience of subject learning inappropriately. While many pupils benefit from a strong focus on English and mathematics, our pupils are entitled to receive a curriculum which provides them with the essential 'cultural capital' they will need to succeed and flourish in their future lives.

6.2. The curriculum will provide at least the breadth and entitlement of the National Curriculum. This is particularly the case in primary Academies and in key stage 3. The National Curriculum sets out the expectations for different subject areas in terms of the broad outcomes pupils ought to reach by the end of each key stage. Our curriculum will ensure that pupils have the opportunities they need to reach these outcomes. For example, in practice, this means all our secondary Academies will provide a three-year Key Stage 3 programme.

6.3. The curriculum will reflect each Academy's context. We do not intend that all academies, in each phase, will offer the same curriculum, either organisationally or in terms of curriculum content. Academies have freedom to organise the curriculum, and to select and sequence the content they teach, to best suit the needs of all of their pupils. Academies are held to account for the impact of their decisions through local and Trust-level quality assurance and review processes, and in terms of the impact on pupils' learning, enjoyment and achievement. However, this does not inhibit any shared curriculum planning between academies, should they wish to share resources and expertise.

6.4. An important principle underpinning curriculum content choices and sequencing is respect for subject disciplines. Whether organised in discrete subjects or in 'topic' based approaches, progression in knowledge and understanding in subjects will usually drive choices and decisions about curriculum design. Supported and challenged by senior leaders, subject leaders will usually lead on subject curriculum decisions.

6.5. The curriculum will ensure access and inclusion. An overarching principle is equality of access to the curriculum. For example, SEND pupils and EAL learners will, wherever possible, be supported to access a common curriculum, rather than be taught a restricted or unduly narrowed curriculum.

6.6. Curriculum development is an on-going and a part of Academy self-review. Every Academy's cycle of self-review and improvement planning will include the curriculum as a core focus area. As Academies are responsible for determining and implementing their curriculum and approach to assessment, the self-review processes will focus on the effectiveness and impact of Academy curricula.

6.7. The curriculum is the cornerstone for workforce development. Good curriculum thinking and design requires intellectual and professional development and commitment. Working on the curriculum is an essential part of developing the skills and expertise of teachers and leaders. A focus on on-going curriculum development will help to strengthen recruitment, retention and succession planning.

7. KEY STAGES 3, 4 AND 5

7.1. Academies should ensure that pupils are provided with a broad and rich curriculum for as long as possible. Pupils must not make option choices too early. To this end, all Academies should provide a three-year Key Stage 3, or be in the process of providing one as soon as possible. Academies who currently provide a two-year Key Stage 3 programme must move as rapidly as possible to a three-year model.

7.2. Sufficient curriculum time should be provided for breadth and depth in each subject and for subject specialist teaching. Insufficient curriculum time leads to shallow learning and an less-positive experience. Pupils are entitled to receive a rounded curriculum in each subject, which provides them with an appropriate balance of substantive and disciplinary knowledge. Curriculum models should avoid, where possible, placing teachers outside of their subject specialisms.

7.3. Key Stage 3 curriculum design should not simply mimic the requirements and content of GCSE programmes. Academies should ensure that the curriculum provided in each subject in key stage 3 is challenging, knowledge-rich and worthwhile in itself. The study of each subject in key stage should provide an authentic and enriching experience – whether or not pupils choose to continue their studies into Key Stage 4. While GCSE assessments

can be useful to support assessment approaches in key stage 3, they should be used judiciously and with a clear rationale.

7.4. Curriculum models should support an increase in the number of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) over time. Over recent years, the proportion of pupils entering the EBacc across the Trust has increased steadily, both overall and in nearly all of our academies. This trend aligns to the ambition of the government and Trust leaders.

7.5. In Key Stages 4 and 5, decisions about curriculum organisation should be made with outcomes in public examinations in mind. The Trust is seeking closer alignment in examination syllabus' to support standardisation and moderation. In addition closer alignment will support a reduction in staff workload through shared approaches.

8. CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES

8.1. The curriculum in our Academies designed to provide access and opportunity for all pupils. If we think it necessary to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of individuals for example through alternative provision or through bespoke SEND qualifications, this must be undertaken in consultation with parents / carers and be needs driven. However, in the great majority of cases, pupils who have SEND will be 'scaffolded' or supported to access the same curriculum content as other pupils. This principle underpins our approach to inclusion.

9. REVIEW

9.1. This Policy will be reviewed every two years by the Deputy CEO - Director of School Improvement and approved by the Educational Leadership Team (TELT) and Trustees. The policy will then be adapted as necessary by academies.