



# Curriculum Policy (Secondary)

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# Document provenance

This Policy was approved by Trustees as follows –

Approver: Education Committee	Date of Approval: October 2020
Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Owner: Director of Education	Date of Review: October 2022 National

*Unless there are legislative or regulatory changes in the interim, this policy will be reviewed every 2 years. Should no substantive changes be required at that point, the policy will move to the next review cycle.*

## Policy Purpose and Summary

This Policy outlines the Trust’s approach to curriculum design and delivery in Secondary Academies.

### Summary of changes at last review:

- ✦ Changes to remove reference to governing bodies where this is now out-of-date.
- ✦ Changes to review time-frame in line with the scheme of delegation.
- ✦ Changes made to fully reflect the Trust’s ‘Curriculum Strategy’

### Related documents:

- ✦ Curriculum Policy Primary

## Policy summary

This document sets out our policy with regard to the provision of a high-quality, aspirational curriculum in each of our secondary academies.

The curriculum is at the heart of our strategy of ‘Opening Minds, Opening Doors’. The curriculum represents what each of our secondary academies 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.

# Curriculum Policy (Secondary)

## 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. Our academy is an environment for high-quality learning at the heart of its community. We promote care 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, 'Opening Minds, Opening Doors'. 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 and the Master Funding Agreement for the Trust is available on the E-ACT main website. 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 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. E-ACT wants all of our pupils to realise their full potential through our values of:

- ✦ Thinking big; ✦ Doing the right thing; ✦ Showing team spirit.

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;
- ✦ 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. Each academy plans its curriculum in four 'layers'. Academies agree a set of principles which apply to their curriculum across the academy. From this flows the 'subject curriculum intent statements'. These set out the aims, purpose and rationale for the curriculum in each subject at the academy.
- 5.2. Next, 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 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 ([link](#)). 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 regional and trust-level 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 (for example, in primary academies), progression in knowledge and understanding in subjects will usually drive choices and decisions about curriculum design. Supported and challenged by senior leaders, subject leaders and co-ordinators 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. In addition, our termly Governance Review Days (GRDs) will scrutinise the quality and impact of the curriculum across the academy.
- 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. All academies should provide a three-year Key Stage 3 or be in the process of providing one as soon as possible. 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 impoverished 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 3 should provide an authentic and enriching experience – whether or not pupils choose to continue their studies into Key Stage 4. While GCSE test instruments (for example, questions) 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 declined steadily, both overall and in nearly all of our academies. This trend runs counter to the ambition of the government, and the gap has been steadily widening. In practice, this is likely to mean that academies should aim to increase, not reduce, curriculum time for humanities subjects, and modern foreign languages in particular.
- 7.5. In Key Stages 4 and 5, decisions about curriculum organisation should be made with outcomes in public examinations in mind. In practice, this will mean focusing teaching time on a suitable number of examination courses, and prioritising pupils' achievement in GCSE English (language and literature) and mathematics in particular. However, the long-term aim should be to reduce the need for high-levels of intervention, assessment and re-teach, particularly in Year 11.

## **8. Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities**

- 8.1. The curriculum in our academy is 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 such as ASDAN and foundation level courses. 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 'mastery' and inclusion. The curriculum will uphold the requirements set out in the DfE (January 2015) SEND Code of Practice<sup>1</sup>.

## **9. Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 9.1. The Regional Education Directors, Trustees and Operation Directors work with individual academies to create a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. The curriculum is scrutinised at termly Governance Review Days (GRDs) and at regional level through the termly Regional Performance Boards (RPBs).

## **10. Review**

- 10.1. This Policy will be reviewed every two years by the National Director of Education and approved by the Executive Leadership Team and Education Committee. The policy will then

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<sup>1</sup> [SEND Code of Practice](#)

be adapted as necessary by academies, with the approval of the Director of Curriculum and Regional Education Directors.



### **Appendix A: Teaching groups, class sizes and grouping by ability.**

The knowledge taught across the three, five or seven years in each subject is decided by the intent statement for each subject, identifying the most powerful knowledge that our students have the right to know. While there are terminal exams for Year 11s and Year 13s, the powerful knowledge is still the focus as the exams are the *outcome of* and not the *reason for* study.

#### **Years 7-9 (KS3)**

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>PERIODS PER WEEK</b>
English	4
Maths	4
Science*	3
History	2
Geography	2
French/German/Literacy	2
PE	2
ADT Rotation	3
Music	1
Drama	1
Reading*	1

\*In Year 9, the reading lesson is given over to Science.

#### **Years 10 and 11 (KS4)**

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>PERIODS PER WEEK</b>
English	5
Maths	5
Core Science	5
Each Option Subject*	3 each
PE	1

\*Please note that Triple Science is classed as an option, so students choosing this option would study 8 hours of Science per week.

#### **Years 12 and 13 (KS5)**

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>PERIODS PER WEEK</b>
Each Option Subject	5* each
Independent Study	10**

\*There are 5 directed hours with a teacher each week, but the expectation is that students complete the same amount of work independently outside of the classroom.

\*\*For most students who study 3 subjects, the 10 hours is an opportunity to complete the majority of the independent work outside of the classroom required for each subject.

### **Class Sizes and Grouping by Ability.**

Class sizes do vary depending on the year group and the subject. For example, most Key Stage 3 and 4 classes have around 25 students per class, but we aim to keep ADT subjects to around 20 students per class due to the specialist equipment necessary (e.g. ovens for Food). In addition, some classes are slightly larger or smaller based on how well developed students' schema is in each subject. Core subjects (English, Maths and Science) are grouped by ability, but these groupings are very flexible and will change across the course of the year.

In Key Stage 5, classes are generally smaller, usually between 10-15 students per class, although some subjects do have around 25 students as part of that group.