

Curriculum Policy

Policy Owner: Standards Director

Approved by: Trust Board

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Due to the evolving nature of Inspiration Trust, procedures behind this Policy will be reviewed and amended accordingly to reflect changes.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time following consultation.

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1. Curriculum Aims & Principles

This policy has been created to deliver our overarching educational strategy, and is informed by the values and priorities of our trust principles. This policy will capture not just our aims, but some of the tensions we must necessarily consider if our aims are to be realised.

A defining Inspiration Trust priority is a curriculum which is truly exceptional and notable for its character and ambition.

At the heart of our strategy is the goal of being the leading trust for pupil progress, because we believe that is one of the best ways to ensure every child meets their potential. That is the entitlement of every young person entrusted to our schools - every child should be given the opportunity to realise that fulfilment.

Part of that work is of course about optimising achievement outcomes. But we believe our curriculum can and should offer more than that, both to the individual, and to the society we prepare our students for. Our curriculum should both feed into the communities we serve and be a doorway to anywhere.

Principles

Our approach is underpinned by five trust principles, all of which consider achievement within a broader school architecture, designed to create the best possible pathway to adulthood. We believe that pathway should be inclusive, supportive, challenging, knowledge-driven and intellectually-demanding. That approach is what should be visible at all times in all Inspiration Trust settings.

Of those principles, these are most relevant to our curriculum work.

- *"We teach **powerful knowledge** so that children can understand, access and influence our society. But, we also teach critiques of this knowledge - to give our children an edge and show them that a canon is always up for debate."*
- *"We guide learning carefully to ensure that all children can access the curriculum and know it. But, we also challenge children to apply their thinking to complex problems to strengthen their **intellectual resilience**."*
- *We raise our children to be comfortable in the social norms of most **workplaces**. But, we think hard about where those norms may not feel inclusive; we want our children to feel welcome.*

Powerful knowledge

We were one of the first school groups in the country to embrace the importance of a knowledge-rich curriculum. Influenced by the work of both ED Hirsch Jnr and Michael FD Young, we saw the power of knowledge to unlock opportunities for our students. By giving them access to powerful knowledge, we give them access to society - the unexplained but assumed knowledge of references, the context behind news and culture. By sharing the knowledge that has shaped society and is considered important within it, we give our children the power to shape their destination and society itself.

In each subject area, we teach a core of knowledge selected on the basis of a number of considerations: its centrality to a given subject discipline; its utility; its social and cultural importance; its relevance to the lives of our students, both now and in the future; its provenance - our curriculum should both reflect the communities we serve, and look beyond them.

It is important to acknowledge that our curriculum is not fixed. If we only teach knowledge that has been considered important, then we are taking a static view of what knowledge is truly powerful, constraining future generations to the knowledge - and misconceptions - of past ones. We can't predict what knowledge will become powerful in the future, but where there is a canon within a subject discipline, we should both teach it, and explore beyond it.

We teach the traditional core of each subject, but where appropriate, we suggest critiques of this knowledge, sharing viewpoints that extend the horizons of conventional thinking. Ultimately, if we only teach a static cultural canon then we are helping students to fit in - but little more. If we teach them a canon and that it can be changed, then we are preparing them for an even greater task - to shape and influence the world.

Intellectual Resilience

In our schools we break down and scaffold knowledge so that every child can learn. Without that, we would have children who are left behind and cannot succeed in school. Just as we teach behaviour in a way that will allow our children to thrive once the structure of school is removed, we need the same aspiration intellectually. That is what we mean by intellectual resilience. Our goal has to be to ultimately prepare our children to do challenging and independent thinking regularly, absent of the guiding influence of a teacher.

This means we must recognise the intellectual journey that we take students on. Of course we must keep teaching new knowledge, both substantive and disciplinary, in a carefully designed way that ensures all children can learn. But we see that as a step on a path towards greater intellectual work that sets children up for success in further education settings and beyond.

Community, Curriculum and the Wider World

We also believe that the curriculum in each school in our trust should meet the needs of the community it serves, in all its diversity and local character. But the curriculum must do more than that; it must celebrate that community, feeding back into it; and it must take each individual beyond their current experiences.

To do that, we prepare students for success in a broad range of subjects and offer them the widest possible range of opportunities. We aim to give students a love of scholarship for its own sake. This scholarship should be an expansive and ambitious one, but we also believe part of that is helping our students understand and take pride in the social context in which they are growing up.

Subject Communities

Our curriculum work is carefully theorised and sequenced by our subject communities - supported by a central team of subject experts. Our central subject leads have excellent subject knowledge which we believe is central to the work of developing teachers in our trust and also our curriculum. They provide both support and challenge to subject leaders in our schools.

The overall purpose of the subject communities, made up of curriculum leads from each school and also the central subject lead, is to develop our curriculum effectively. Each community is a forum of specialised knowledge and expertise, which generates the best curriculum planning through a process of ongoing dialogue, research, debate and sharing of resources. In primary these communities may be organised into phases, for example Early Years.

This is a dynamic process, in which school-based curriculum leads play a crucial role shaping the overall direction set by central-team subject leads.

Common Trust Curriculum

We cannot meet our objectives around curriculum excellence without both clear direction from the subject specialists in our central education team and also strong curriculum leadership in each school setting.

To strive for excellence, we build on the shared expertise of our education teams and our subject communities. Rather than 'reinventing the wheel' by developing curriculum and resources independently in individual schools, we collaborate in a continuous and structured way, creating the space for teachers and subject leaders in school to agree best practice in curriculum design and implementation.

In line with this we have a common trust curriculum in:

- Early Years (for September 2021 rollout)
- Key Stage 1 (for September 2021 rollout)
 - English (including RWInc phonics), maths, science, history, geography, religious studies, music and art
- Key Stage 2
 - English, maths, science, history, geography, religious studies, music and art (art - 2021 rollout)
- Key Stage 3
 - English, maths, science, MFL, history, geography, religious studies, music and art (art - 2021 rollout)

We also take a collaborative approach to resourcing at Key Stage 4 in many of our subjects, where the subject discipline supports this and where such an approach contributes to raising standards.

The agreed common curriculum allows for local flexibility, where schools can make distinct curriculum choices to further meet the needs of their pupil communities. Each principal is responsible for both enacting the agreed core curriculum, which is common to all trust schools, and taking local decisions which are in the best interests of each specific school community. Principals are also responsible for measuring and evaluating curriculum impact through robust monitoring systems. Decisions around implementation such as timetabling, classes, allocation of teachers are at the discretion of principals. In primary, there is a minimum agreed curriculum allocation for each subject, which is implemented in all our schools. We ensure they also have the flexibility to timetable as best meets the needs of their students and community.

There is also the space for curriculum innovation in our schools because strong leadership gives our schools an edge and their own identity. Where subject teams/schools are performing highly they may wish to pilot and develop curriculum innovations. This should be done in partnership with central subject leads and/or the trust executive. That way, our schools are part of a dynamic network, in which they are supported to deliver an agreed curriculum of the highest quality, and have the opportunity to broker important variations to best meet the needs of their students.

It is the responsibility of the trust executive and/or central education team to review curriculum implementation and impact if high educational standards are not achieved and ensure development areas are acted on.

A curriculum entitlement

We prepare students for success in a broad range of subjects and offer them the widest possible range of opportunities, situating curriculum as a vehicle for social equity. Our curriculum must take each pupil beyond their current experiences. We therefore offer a minimum curriculum entitlement in our trust schools:

Primary

- Core curriculum that includes English (including phonics), maths, science, history, geography, religious studies, PE, music, PSHE, RSHE and art. Not all these subjects will be offered discreetly in Early Years. Our Early Years policy has more information on our Early Years curriculum.
- Access to a high quality literature and wide opportunities to read for pleasure
- The opportunity to take part in dramatic or musical performances, for example singing in a choir, performing in a play or playing an instrument in an ensemble
- The opportunity to take in wider cultural experiences for example visiting an art gallery or going to the theatre
- The opportunity to play a competitive sport
- Access to high quality enrichment opportunities

Secondary

- Core curriculum that includes English, maths, science, MFL, history, geography, religious studies, PE, music, PSHE, RSHE and art in Key Stage 3. We encourage schools that are able to offer an even wider curriculum in the Performing Arts to do so, where it meets the needs of their community.
- All students must have the opportunity to study a language in Key Stage 3
- All students must have the opportunity to study a wider STEM subject in addition to science and maths, for example DT and/or computing in Key Stage 3
- We encourage our schools to offer triple science, but also support our schools in ensuring students are taking qualifications in which they will flourish.
- All students must have access to a high quality enrichment offer and participation rates must be high, particularly for our most disadvantaged students
- All students must have access to a broad and balanced Key Stage 4 subject offer that prepares them well for the next stage of their education or career journey. Our normal offer will be for 9 GCSEs; we would expect students not to take more than 11 GCSEs apart from in exceptional cases. In some cases, a different curriculum pathway will be appropriate to meet a pupil's individual needs.

We consider the English Baccalaureate to be a useful measure of academic ambition. It is also a qualification that widens opportunities for students. All our schools aspire for English Baccalaureate participation to be at least national average and often exceed this. We recognise that sometimes schools will need time to ensure they have the resources in place to achieve this.

We also acknowledge that the EBacc is one interpretation of what is a desirable academic outcome. We understand that for some students the EBacc is not the best pathway. To facilitate success in priority subjects such as English and Maths, some of our students may benefit from a non-EBacc route with an enhanced program of support. Also, there may be students with a very specific career or educational aspiration for whom the EBacc would be inappropriate.

Sixth Form

- All students will be able to choose from a range of quality Level 3 qualifications
- All students will access a core curriculum that includes careers guidance and PSHE, including RSHE.
- All students will have access to a high quality enrichment offer
- All students will have access to encounters with employers, workplaces, further and higher education
- All students will have access to expert, individual support and guidance for their 'after sixth form' preparations

An Inclusive Curriculum

'We guide learning carefully to ensure that all children can access the curriculum and know it.'

We believe that access to a knowledge rich curriculum based on powerful knowledge is an entitlement for all our students. However, we also know that some students will require more support to access the curriculum. Our schools think carefully about how to ensure that access.

Often this means thinking about the best pedagogical approaches that help students to understand and access knowledge and remember it. Teachers may need to pre-teach vocabulary or content, disaggregate knowledge into component parts or approach teaching slightly differently for some students. We believe in the primacy of quality-first teaching, but some students may need additional support to ensure they can be successful.

Teachers and leaders will ensure that the needs of all students are met, including:

- High prior attaining students
- Low prior attaining students
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)

SEND provision will be provided as set out in our SEND policy and may require reasonable adjustments to be made or additional support provided for students. Further information can be found in our statement of equality information and objectives, and in our SEND policy and information report.

Principals should ensure they have the necessary monitoring in place to verify that all students are accessing the curriculum effectively and experiencing success. If monitoring demonstrates that this is not the case, swift action should be taken to ensure that students have the support they need.

Wider Personal Development

We want our students to be able to understand, access and influence our society. We also wish to support them in their own personal development and prepare them for the independence of adulthood, enabling them to be healthy and happy.

We promote physical and mental well-being throughout the curriculum. We promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, both through our PSHE curricula and also our enrichment offers and wider curriculum.

We also recognise the significant importance of relationship, sex and health education to students' personal development, wellbeing and safety. All our schools deliver high quality RSHE appropriate to the age of their students and their community.

Through our curriculum we also develop and deepen our students' understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance.

Careers Education

'We raise our children to be comfortable in the social norms of most workplaces.'

We provide an effective careers programme in line with the government's statutory guidance on careers advice that offers students:

- unbiased careers advice
- experience of work, or related experiences
- contact with employers

We support readiness for the next phase of education, training or employment so that students are equipped to make the transition successfully and use standards such as the Gatsby Benchmarks to evaluate our careers education offer - aspiring for excellence as we do with the rest of our curriculum.

Career-related learning in our primary schools is about helping children to understand who they could become and helping them to develop a healthy sense of self and independence that will enable them to reach their full potential. The careers programme in primaries includes career focused sessions in assemblies and PSHE lessons and also integrating careers wherever it links to the curriculum. The following may be included in careers sessions: talks from people with different careers, case studies from professionals in different careers and assemblies from inspirational individuals.

Assessment

At the heart of our educational strategy is the goal of being the leading trust for pupil progress, because we believe that is the one of the best ways to ensure every child meets their potential. That is the entitlement of every young person entrusted to our schools - every child should be given the opportunity to realise that fulfilment.

So alongside a common trust curriculum approach, we also approach assessment with rigour and high aspirations. We think carefully about ensuring reliability and validity of assessment and also take an informed approach to frequency of tests so schools are not overburdened and teaching time is prioritised.

Our conception of progress is underpinned by (but not limited to) the principle that the curriculum is the progression model. That is to say our students are considered to be making appropriate academic progress if they demonstrate that they are secure in the knowledge and content of our curriculum as

appropriate to their stage in our curriculum mapping. Our trust-specific tests assess an expanding domain of knowledge so we can be confident that students continue to retain curriculum knowledge, understand it and apply it.

Our schools participate in trust wide assessments that:

- measure the extent to which our students are secure in the knowledge set out in our core curricula
- provide the opportunity for trust wide inferences and analysis to be drawn
- support the ongoing evaluation of the trust curriculum
- allow reliable school and trust level forecasts to be made in relation to phonics, KS2, KS4 and KS5 outcomes in Ys 1, 6,11 and 13.

Our schools also participate in regular tests that support benchmarking against national standards. This might include annual GL assessments in KS3 or PiXL tests in primary. This ensures we can take assurance that our curriculum is ambitious and securing the highest educational standards.

All common assessments are set out annually in a 'data and assessment' calendar. Our assessment arrangements always consider staff workload and well-being as a priority.

Formative assessments

Our whole-trust assessment approach does not fully encompass all layers of assessment that need to be in place to robustly and regularly monitor and evaluate curriculum impact in a school setting.

High quality formative assessment is key. Low-stakes quizzing, multiple-choice tests, targeted questioning and regular reviews of pupil books are all effective formative assessment approaches. Formative assessment approaches should be informed by an understanding of the subject discipline.

Principals should ensure that robust formative assessment approaches are embedded in their schools and systems and that they can confidently evaluate curriculum impact in a way that doesn't entirely rely on summative testing which may be just termly or annually.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy reflects the requirements for academies to provide a broad and balanced curriculum as per the [Academies Act 2010](#), and the [National Curriculum programmes of study](#) which we have chosen to follow.

It also reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014](#) and [Equality Act 2010](#), and refers to curriculum-related expectations of governing boards set out in the Department for Education's [Governance Handbook](#).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The trustees

The board of trustees will establish the educational vision for its schools and curriculum approach, and both monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the CEO and executive team to account for its implementation and effectiveness

They will ensure that:

- The schools in the trust implement the relevant statutory assessment arrangements

- A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets
- All courses provided for students below the age of 19 that lead to qualifications, such as GCSEs and A-levels, are approved by the secretary of state
- The curriculum vision and policy is supported by sufficient resourcing.
- The school is complying with its funding agreement and teaching a "broad and balanced curriculum" which includes English, maths, and science, and enough teaching time is provided for students to cover the requirements of the funding agreement
- Proper provision is made for students with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs (SEN)

3.2 The academy committees

The academy committees will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the principal to account for its implementation.

They will also ensure that:

- The school is complying with its funding agreement and teaching a "broad and balanced curriculum" which includes English, maths, and science, and enough teaching time is provided for students to cover the requirements of the funding agreement
- Proper provision is made for students with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs (SEND)
- It participates actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum
- Pupils from year 8 onwards are provided with independent, impartial careers guidance, and that this is appropriately resourced

3.4 Trust Executive

The trust executive will monitor the effectiveness of this policy at trust level and hold the principals to account for its implementation.

They will also ensure that:

- there is a clear vision for curriculum in the trust and that this is underpinned by clearly shared curriculum principles and clearly set out standards and expectations
- Our schools have the highest possible educational standards and outcomes
- curriculum impact is robustly monitored regularly
- curriculum implementation and monitoring arrangements are reviewed if high educational standards are not achieved.
- Proper provision is made for students with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs (SEN)
- Robust assessment is in place to monitor curriculum standards effectively
- The central education team, including central subject leads are implementing this policy effectively and also supporting schools in effective implementation
- There is excellent support for schools in terms of curriculum implementation
- The curriculum vision and policy is supported by sufficient resourcing, including appropriate use of Integrated Curriculum Led Financial Planning

3.5 Principals

Principals are responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that:

- Agreed common trust curricula are implemented but also that due attention is paid to ensuring the needs of the school's community are met and that curriculum decisions are also informed by this.
- Robust curriculum monitoring and evaluation strategies are in place.
- Their school fully participates in agreed trust assessment arrangements
- A full assessment strategy is in place that ensures high quality formative assessment is in place
- The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the academy committee
- Teachers receive high quality CPD to support effective curriculum delivery and implementation, particularly around effective pedagogical approaches and subject knowledge
- They manage requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects, where appropriate
- The school's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements
- The academy committee is fully involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum
- An inclusive approach to curriculum is in place and all students can access the curriculum effectively including SEND/LPA/HPA/disadvantaged/EAL.
- The academy committee is advised on whole-school targets in order to make informed decisions
- Proper provision is in place for students with different needs, including children with SEND
- Necessary monitoring in place to verify that all students are accessing the curriculum effectively and experiencing success.

3.6 Subject/Phase Leaders

Subject Leaders are responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to in their subject/area, and that:

- The agreed common trust curriculum are implemented
- The agreed school curriculum is implemented
- They seek to innovate, in terms in subject leadership, within the framework set out in this policy and in the spirit of collaboration and collegiality
- Teachers in their team/department receive high quality CPD to support effective curriculum delivery and implementation, particularly around effective pedagogical approaches, subject knowledge and support of SEND/LPA/HPA/disadvantaged/EAL students
- Ensure their school fully participates in agreed trust assessment arrangements for their subject(s)
- They participate in and fully contribute to the subject/phase communities
- Curriculum standards are robustly monitored and evaluated through regular formative assessment, review of pupil work and timely summative assessment
- They take an inclusive approach, ensuring all students receive the support they need to enable them to fully access the curriculum, including LPA/HPA/disadvantaged/EAL.
- SEND students receive the support they need in their subject to enable to fully access the curriculum

3.7 Teachers

Teachers are responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to in their teaching, and that:

- The agreed common trust curriculum is implemented in their teaching

- The agreed school curriculum is implemented in their teaching
- They fully participate in agreed trust assessment arrangements for their subject
- They use effective teaching approaches and pedagogies to deliver the curriculum effectively
- They participate in and fully contribute to the subject/phase communities either directly or through their subject leader
- They engage fully in CPD - including induction and our teacher development offer as appropriate to their role.
- Curriculum standards are robustly monitored and evaluated through regular formative assessment, review of pupil work and timely summative assessment
- They take an inclusive approach, ensuring all students receive the support they need to enable them to fully access the curriculum, including LPA/HPA/disadvantaged/EAL.
- SEND students receive the support they need in to enable to fully access the curriculum

4. Monitoring arrangements

Trustees, academy committees and the trust executive monitor whether the school is complying with its funding agreement and teaching a “broad and balanced curriculum” which includes the required subjects, through:

- Trust Reviews
- School Visits
- Data analysis
- Annual curriculum review
- Curriculum visits
- Subject Reviews/Deep Dives

Subject leaders monitor the way their subject is taught throughout the school by enacting their agreed monitoring and assessment strategies. This will be cognisant of the subject discipline but may include:

- work scrutiny
- low stakes testing
- pupil voice
- lesson observations
- learning walks
- Review through curriculum meetings and co-planning

This policy will be reviewed annually by the trust executive.

5. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Early Years Policy
- Non-examination assessment policy
- SEND policy and information report
- Equality information and objectives
- Trust curriculum documents including assessment schedules