Ambitions Academy Trust -Curriculum Rationale

Intent

 Within the Secondary Sector at Ambitions Academy Trust we believe each and every child has the right to achieve the very best for themselves both academically and personally. We are steadfast in our vision that the quality of our education removes the barriers to social mobility as well as improving the life chances of our students thus enabling equality with other students, both locally and nationally. The curriculum model we offer within our Secondary Sector allows progression throughout KS3 and 4, building solid foundations and ensuring students’ education (through continual support and guidance) are prepared for achieving in Post 16

We offer a knowledge based progressive curriculum model that assesses the skills developed through acquisition and allows for the intelligent repetition of content learnt throughout the key stages thus ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Not only does the vision for our curriculum address the minds of the students, but the students as a whole

The Curriculum is not just an accumulation of knowledge built up over an academic career, but also the sum of a student’s life experience. This is what helps shape the aspirations of our young people and allows them to achieve beyond any preconceived social expectations others may have.

“Having a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life is Key” (Education Act 2002).

Each and every child will not only take part in a broad and balanced offer, but also a tailored weekly enrichment offer that includes opportunities for our students to try activities that otherwise they might not have been afforded to them.

Additionally, we have extra-curricular opportunities such as clubs and trips for students to develop a cultural capital and appreciation of subjects beyond what is expected from examination alone

Our students are guided through their education to ensure that they not only make the right choices at crucial times in their lives, but also to ensure they do not make ones that have the potential to stifle their personal development or prevent social mobility through making assumptions based on misconceptions.

However, we firmly believe that all of this would come to nothing if our students are unable to access the work they read. With this in mind, all our students in Key Stage 3 take part in a reading program that allows them to develop their reading skills by targeting any gaps they may have.

In research undertaken by Durham University’s ‘What works and what fails?. Within evidence collated from literacy catch-up schemes for the transition to secondary schools in England (2017), it was found that for both PP and Non-PP students reading programs offered a significant impact on improved reading ability/literacy when properly coordinated. “On the basis of these findings, a school looking to assist pupils with literacy at the transition period, and reduce the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, would be advised to select Switch-on Reading, or perhaps Accelerated Reader” (Gorard, S. and Siddiqui, N. and See, B.H. 2017)

Furthermore, it was noted that “the most successful interventions were based on individual or small-group sessions. It would be best if these were conducted as part of general literacy classes (where other pupils could have more advanced interventions or use the library), rather than the target pupils missing other lessons to attend the intervention session.” (Gorard et al., 2017 p.20)

With this in mind, we allocate time within the curriculum to small-scale literacy interventions like Reading Plus, which are led by an English specialist. This ensures that every student no matter what their starting point, is given his or her best opportunity to make the progress they deserve within our Academies.

Implementation & Impact

Ensuring the effective implementation of the curriculum within Ambitions Academy trust is paramount.

In particular, we consider that there are problems with the current structure of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and their interaction with patterns of adolescent development and motivation. The dip in achievement at Key Stage 3 is a well-documented phenomenon that is often attributed to a lack of student engagement and sense of purpose, as well as the patterns of adolescent development and motivation. (DfE, 2011)

With this in mind we feel it is essential to be able to build on solid foundations to offer our students, the ‘quality of education’ they deserve in order to support their ability to build on knowledge and to apply that knowledge as skills.

Developing our students’ ability to subconsciously transfer the knowledge and key skills we teach them within the classroom can only be done by the carefully planned and sequenced lessons that encourage students to revisit and build upon what they are learning, whilst all the time identifying and correcting misunderstandings as they grow as independent learners/thinkers.

Key Stage 3

Our teachers within Key Stage 3 focus on key concepts that develop knowledge, skills and understanding. The teachers are flexible in their delivery and ensure that pupils have sufficient time to consolidate their learning (DfES,2006). And, where necessary, allow time to revisit subject matter.

Students study a broad and balanced curriculum not only in Key Stage 4, but also Key Stage 3 that ensures a rigorous academic offer, whilst also considering the school’s local context/demographic giving our students an ambitious vocational and technical diet through a carefully planned Design, Technology & Vocational (DTV) rotation that allows for the cross curriculum transfer of knowledge and skills. The rotation of groups ensures coverage of subjects like Engineering, Design Technology, Graphics, Computing and Catering; therefore, ensuring students are fully prepared for any technical subjects they may choose in Key Stage 4.

With this in mind, our students will study English, Maths & Science as core subjects along with the Humanities subjects of Geography, History, Religious Studies and Modern Foreign languages. Creative Arts are also important and our students will study Art and the Performing Arts in weekly lessons where they will develop an understanding of a wide range of creative approaches using different mediums within Art. Students will also develop their confidence through performance in lessons on Drama, Dance & the appreciation of Music.

Within the Secondary Sector, we take our students’ ability to read very seriously. It is essential that all students are able to access the work they will encounter regardless of subject matter. To ensure this can happen, all of our Key Stage 3 students have 1 lesson a week of targeted reading. Furthermore, to support our lowest ability students we also run additional interventions such as Accelerated reader and literacy groups for students who enter Key Stage 3 with low Verbal and Reading scores from Primary education.

When looking at the transition between key stages, we were careful to consider the well-documented phenomenon of a dip in achievement at Key Stage 3 that is often attributed to a lack of student engagement and sense of purpose, as well as the patterns of adolescent development and motivation (DfE, 2011)

Whilst we do offer a 2-year Key Stage 4 curriculum, year 9 is used as a foundation year to bridge the gap between the key skills taught in years 7 & 8 and what students need in order to be better prepared for their GCSEs. This should not be confused with an additional year to complete their GCSE as it is not just about the subject content that needs to be covered, but more about the students own cognitive development that allows them to access the higher order learning. During this time, the students get the opportunity to study in further depth some subjects that they particularly enjoy. Using year 9 as a precursor to the GCSE allows for a smoother transition to the work that many students can often find quite challenging to retain. By carefully considering the process of Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1998), teachers are able to ensure students retain the key concepts over time. By using this transition period to ensure students have developed a deeper understanding of subject matter that is not just merely ‘surface learning’ and thereby creating a solid foundation from Key Stage 3 allowing for the scaffolding of knowledge through intrinsic cognitive load. By doing so we are breaking down the subject content, sequencing the delivery so that sub-tasks are taught individually before being explained together as a whole. The idea is to not overwhelm a student too early on in the introduction of new work, such as is seen in the initial terms of GCSE work.



Similarly, much of the cohort that attend our Academies will arrive from local primary sectors with a lower than National Average APS. Using similar techniques to which we have just mentioned, along with a greater understanding of what students have learnt or often not learnt we are able to quickly identify gaps in their knowledge and address these so that time is not wasted in KS3 and students are able to access the full breadth of our offer.

Key Stage 4

Our Key Stage 4 curriculum is a broadly balanced offer which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life (Education Act 2002). Between 50 to 60% of our timetable should be given over to the Core subjects.

In year 10, our Students study English, Maths and Double Science. Their options blocks comprise 1 EBacc option and 3 Open bucket options (all of which also include at least 1 EBacc subject) all of which are 2 lessons per week. To add to this, students have 2 lesson of PE per week.

In year 11, the curriculum model changes slightly by increasing the option blocks to 3 lessons per week as well as having a 1-2-1 support to assist students who are struggling.

The subjects we offer can include subject such as

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * English Language
* English Literature
* Mathematics
* Double Science
* History
* Geography
* Modern Foreign Languages
* Religious Studies
* Art and Design
* Photography
* Computer Science
* ICT
 | * Design Technology (This can be inclusive of different pathways within the award)
* Engineering
* Business Studies
* Child Development & Education
* Health & Social Care
* Physical Education
* Sport Studies
* Music
* Performing Arts (Dance & Drama)
* Hospitality and Catering
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Personal Development

Extra Curricula

The school curriculum is not only the subjects on the timetable; it is the whole experience of education.’ (John Dunford, 2012) From year 7 through to year 10, all of our students take part in a weekly timetabled Enrichment programme that they opt for once a term. This affords them opportunities to take part in certain activities that they otherwise may never have done.

Wherever possible, our students should be encouraged to apply their learning to real life situations such as nursery work placements within our primary schools for those studying Child Development & Education or Health & Social Care and ‘The Tenner Challenge’ in Business and Enterprise studies. Similarly, 100% of our year 10 cohort will take part in a compulsory two-week Work Experience programme.

Programmes Such as Duke of Edinburgh and the National Citizenship Service are also actively encouraged. Although the latter is only in year 11.

Careers

The careers curriculum is designed to help the pupils plan and take control of their future, ensuring they are ready for Adult life. In KS3 students, receive information on careers through workshops which are designed to help the children prepare for their options in KS4 and Post 16.

Pupils in year 10 & 11, have access to an impartial careers advisor, who will interview all students formally on a one-to-one basis. Mock interviews with employers take place for all year 11 students where they will utilise the CV they will have developed in their English class in year 10 for their Work Experience placement.

All year groups have the opportunity to develop their employability and enterprise skills through taking part in various activities.

All year 10 students take part in a compulsory 2-week Work Experience placement. The aim is to give pupils a first-hand experience of the world of work. During each year, a variety of external providers are invited in to our Academies to speak to year groups between year 8 and 11 about employability including vocational, traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities.

Research undertaken by Dr Anthony Mann, (2014, Education and Employers Taskforce) shows statistically significant positive relationships exist between the number of employer contacts (such as careers talks or work experience) that a young person experience in school. Student who have four or more employer led activities while at school were five times less likely to be NEET and earned, on average, 16% more than peers who recalled no such activities.

SMSC and British values

We explore SMSC, British values where we develop positive attitudes, tolerance and understanding of all cultures and communities. This is done through various mediums such as, our compulsory Religious Studies classes in Key Stage 3, the tutor groups and the themes delivered within them and through House and Year Assemblies where we develop a clear and rigorous expectation of our students to promote the fundamental British values of democracy. Enabling them to understand the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect of those with different faiths and beliefs.

The aims of our SMSC programme are:

* To ensure our students have a holistic education that includes learning how to live, work and play together, understanding and respecting others’ points of view, respecting and applying rules and understanding why these exist.
* Developing our students so they are actively able to contribute to society and culture throughout their lives, and enable them to participate positively in the life of the school, their local community and wider society.
* Give them an understating of their intrinsic value and their unique contributions to their own and others’ lives, and in turn to value and celebrate others and their qualities and abilities.

We recognise that you cannot always demonstrate the impact of the work done around Personal Development while the student are still at school. The benefits are often not realised until much later in post 16 education or Adult life

In order to ensure these skills run throughout the curriculum, we map out how and where we embed these skills within different subject. This signposted within the Medium term plans (see figure below) with a legend based upon Ofsted own criteria and some of the Gatsby benchmarks.

Expectations of the Curriculum

Whilst we are very proud of our curriculum model, we are also very aware of the need to ensure the transition for Primary to Secondary does not hinder our students’ development. Therefore, we should plan for curriculum, pedagogical continuity and progression between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3; by providing teachers at the beginning of Year 7 with the information they need to meet the needs of individual pupils and to build on what pupils already know, understand and can do. (Institute of Education, 2006)

In order to facilitate this, we must work very closely with our own primary schools from within the trust. Furthermore, the Academies own feeder schools to ensure our year 7 offer meets the needs of our students and is not repetitious of what they have already studied (unless as previously discussed, there is a quantifiable need to revisit certain subject matter).

The following tables represent the expectations of the curriculum model for both Key stage 3 and 4. These are based upon a 50-hour two week timetable in years 7 through to 10 and a 55-hour timetable in year11.

Key Stage 3

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Subject** | **Lessons** |
| English | 8 |
| Reading Intervention | 2 |
| Maths | 8 |
| Science | 8 |
| MFL | 3 |
| Geography | 2 |
| History | 2 |
| Religious Studies | 2 |
| Performing Arts | 3 |
| Creative Arts | 2 |
| Design Technology & Vocational | 4 |
| Physical Education | 3 |
| Enrichment (excluding Extra Curricula) | 2 |
| PSHE | 1 |

Key Stage 4

Years 10

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Subject** | **Lessons** |
| English | 9 |
| Maths | 8 |
| Science | 8 |
| Ebacc | 5 |
| Option X | 5 |
| Options Y | 5 |
| Option Z | 5 |
| Physical Education  | 3 |
| Enrichment | 2 |

Year 11

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Subject** | **Lessons** |
| English | 9 |
| Maths | 9 |
| Science | 9 |
| Ebacc | 5 |
| Option X | 5 |
| Options Y | 5 |
| Option Z | 5 |
| Physical Education  | 3 |

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