

## Our approach to the curriculum

### Start with why

Our trust curriculum approach is based around eight core beliefs (or principles) that allow us to fulfil our mission (or purpose) so that all our pupils can become the best they can be.

This means that our children need access to a rich and broad curriculum that ensures learning is experiential and meaningful so that it makes a deep emotional connection.

Many of our pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Starting points are often low and prior to beginning school a significant proportion of children have not had access and exposure to an appropriate range of social and cultural experiences. As a result, pupils have gaps in their existing knowledge, vocabulary, personal development and cognitive skills that may prevent them from becoming good citizens and future employees. Our curriculum therefore serves to enrich and empower them.

This is why we have developed a knowledge-rich and challenge-based curriculum that has been carefully designed to ensure that all our pupils leave school able to read and write, whilst at the same time can demonstrate the characteristics and traits associated with deep and effective learning.

Our curriculum is driven by our five trust values of FIDES and we expect all our pupils to behave in such a way as to live and breathe them on a daily basis. These include:

- F**ocusing on family (by being loyal)
- I**nsisting on excellence (by being tenacious)
- D**oing good as you go (by being kind)
- E**mbacing innovation (by being courageous)
- S**eizing success (by being brilliant)

In order to help learners embed these values, we ensure the curriculum provides a carefully planned sequence of well-structured opportunities – either implicitly or explicitly - for personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is also essential so that pupils can make deeper links between knowledge acquired and its use and application to make sense of the world and their place in it.

## What (intent)

### Our aims and beliefs

Our curriculum aims to ensure that by time pupils leave school - taking into account their starting points – they must be able to:

- demonstrate that they are effective learners with a depth and breadth of powerful knowledge, understanding and skills;
- achieve well across the full range and breadth of the curriculum, including reading, writing and mathematics, and;
- continue to flourish because they are well-equipped and empowered to become the best they can be.

In order to fulfil these aims, we have eight core principles (or beliefs) that inform our curriculum intent.

We believe that the curriculum should be:

1. structured to ensure that learning is **real, immersive and purposeful**;
2. designed to capture pupils' imaginations, with a continual stream of **memorable experiences** that allow them to make real-world connections with their learning;
3. **challenge-based** so that pupils have to work hard to solve difficult problems using their acquired knowledge and understanding in more complex situations (skills);
4. broad, balanced and sequenced in such a way to provide pupils with a rich, spiralling **breadth of knowledge** that ensures a deep and meaningful understanding of their world and beyond;
5. seen as a **framework** that allows individual schools and teachers the freedom to sequence learning in a way that best meets the interests and needs of the children;
6. taught within a **pedagogical approach** that promotes the development of key learning behaviours and cognitive skills such as meta-cognition, resilience, critical thinking, perseverance and collaboration, as a result of explicit modelling and teaching;
7. driven by an approach to **assessment** that allows teachers to check progress over time so that all pupils attain well based on regular feedback;
8. planned around the key principles of the **NICER** framework:
  - **Now**: Activities are based on pupil interests, prior knowledge and understanding
  - **Independence**: Pupils know what to do when stuck
  - **Creating**: Learning is creative and purposeful with a clear end product (public)
  - **Enterprise**: Pupils are skilled at solving complex real-world problems
  - **Regional**: Learning is meaningful and relevant to the child in the local context

## How (implementation)

Each academy will design a challenge-based curriculum that best meets the needs of its pupils within the five key principles of NICER.

The sequencing and structure may vary from school to school, but the end point in regard to coverage and content will remain consistent across the trust so that the curricular aims can be met.

As a result, it is likely that the sequencing of the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills may vary in different schools.

The trust has an agreed approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Individual academies are able to adapt this to suit their needs providing it follows the key principles (available on our [website](#)). Our pedagogical approach is therefore intended as a framework. There is no one preferred style of teaching, providing learning remains real, immersive and purposeful and that pupils receive continual feedback on how they can improve based on regular teacher assessment.

An agreed body of knowledge exists for each subject domain that is sequenced and implemented as part of a unit of work (challenge pack, topic, theme). Each unit is typically designed to last one term. At the start of each unit, assessment is used to determine pupils' prior knowledge and understanding in order to inform appropriate content and coverage. Teachers will then check the progress pupils are making over time, ensuring that they attain well at each end-point. Unless a school is in a category (an early sponsor), the expectation is that assessment information updates will take place no more frequently than once per term.

Each challenge pack (unit) contains a number of key features, including (but not limited to):

- an experiential 'hook' at the start that captures imagination to ensure learning sticks
- the entire body of knowledge (subject domain) that pupils need to know and understand, including phonics, learning behaviours/cognitive skills and key vocabulary
- a learning challenge that results in a public product that provides the context to allow pupils to demonstrate mastery of the knowledge and learning behaviours within a range of complex situations
- links to prior and relational learning including the wider world

A copy of the curriculum map, including content, structure, sequencing and knowledge and skills ladders are available from each academy.

Each academy is free to develop its own approach to the provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In most cases, this will form an integral part of the challenge pack but may also be taught explicitly.

## So what? (impact)

The impact of our curriculum will be evidenced through the extent to which each academy fulfils the curriculum aims (intent). Namely, that every child is able to:

- demonstrate that they are effective learners with a depth and breadth of powerful knowledge, understanding and skills;
- achieve well across the full range and breadth of the curriculum, including reading, writing and mathematics, and;
- continue to flourish because they are well-equipped and empowered to become the best they can be.

Each academy will develop its own system of collecting, analysing and evaluating assessment information. Subject leaders will be responsible for this, ensuring that teacher workload remains manageable. Leaders will also check coverage to ensure that every pupil has access to the full breadth and depth of the curriculum and that any barriers to doing so are removed.

In addition to published data on the IDSR, the trust uses a number of different ways of measuring impact. These may include:

- Pupil progress conversations
- Book scrutinies and learning walks
- Trust-wide and local authority moderation
- Leadership networks
- Appraisal and professional learning conversations
- Internal quality assurance checks, including peer review
- Monitoring and review conversations
- Academy council and board monitoring
- External challenge partner reviews

We use all of this information to evaluate the overall impact of the curriculum including our 'Big 6' scorecard (available on our [website](#)).

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