

Curriculum Policy

Context

Aspire AP School is committed to engaging with young people who are in crisis in their education. Many of them have experienced or are experiencing significant barriers to learning within mainstream school and demonstrate particular educational, social and emotional needs. The majority of students who access the support of Aspire AP School come with either trauma or attachment issues, SEN (both formally diagnosed and undiagnosed) or in many instances both.

Students attend Aspire AP School on a part-time basis for a period of at least one term. Students attend two or four days a week and attend their referring school or other alternative programmes on the days they are not at Aspire AP School.

Our own research shows that students spend on average two school terms at Aspire AP School. Therefore Aspire AP School's curriculum is rooted in the solid consensus of the school's leaders about the substantive and disciplinary knowledge and skills that students need in order to take advantage of opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. The structure of the curriculum seeks to address the serious issue of cumulative dysfluency that many of our students have experienced. The curriculum reflects the school's local context by addressing typical gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills, in this way, it can powerfully address social disadvantage.

Aspire AP School are registered with the DfE as Independent Schools. Within that context, there is currently no requirement to deliver the National Curriculum. Instead, it is expected that schools will give pupils experience in the following areas of learning: linguistic; mathematical; scientific; technological; human and social; physical; and aesthetic and creative.

The Intent of our curriculum:

We want students at Aspire AP School to experience a knowledge rich curriculum. Taking students from a range of different schools and at different stages in their education the curriculum needs to provide not just substantive knowledge but a deeper focus on disciplinary knowledge. In the short time students are at Aspire AP School we can't possibly hope to cover all the subject specific substantive knowledge delivered in their mainstream setting but we can help them with the disciplinary knowledge to help them think more like a mathematician or a scientist or reason and argue like a historian. Knowledge and skills are intertwined in our efforts to ensure all learners deepen their understanding and retain knowledge in their long-term memory. At Aspire AP School we recognise that many of our students have neurological difficulties with working memory and therefore the transfer of information to long-term memory is hampered.

Therefore, the intent that sits behind all of our curriculum is that we are able to identify and instil in our students what it is to be an effective learner, so that skills and knowledge aren't lost but built upon and strengthened. Metacognition is a fundamental concept in the development of thinking skills and personal capabilities because it refers to the student's ability to plan, monitor, redirect and evaluate how they think and learn. Most of our thinking is developed informally as we engage in both every day and school activities. Developing thinking skills means designing learning so that students will think more skilfully than they would otherwise do – to engage them in better quality thinking. Thus, thinking skills are tools that help students go beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge in order to deepen their understanding and apply ideas, generate new possibilities and make decisions as well as to plan, monitor and evaluate their progress.

So part of our curriculum intent is to make learning and thinking skills more visible in particular the 4 key areas of:

- i) Problem-Solving and Decision-Making
- ii) Managing Information
- iii) Effective Enquiry
- iv) Creative Thinking

During their time at Aspire AP School we want to:

- Re-engage students in learning.
- Develop learning behaviours and help students understand how to become effective learners.
- Help students to improve levels of literacy and numeracy.
- Develop students' vocabulary because of the correlation between vocabulary size and life chances.
- Help students develop transferrable thinking skills and personal capabilities that support reintegration into a mainstream school setting or further education.
- Prepare young people for the challenges and responsibilities of adult life.
- Offer qualifications (where relevant) that provide opportunities for progression onto further education or training.

To achieve our Intent (Implementation of our curriculum):

Our curriculum intent outlined the need to develop effective learners and for this to happen the implementation has to include the development of some key thinking skills. It is essential that we focus on the skills that allow students to access the learning in all subjects. Raising awareness of the vital use of the basic and wider thinking skills and how they help pupils to access knowledge across all subjects is implicit in how we plan our approaches to curriculum implementation. The 4 key learning and thinking skills have been drawn from two national frameworks the 'PLTS' (Personal

Learning Thinking Skills) and the Northern Ireland 'Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities' programme. The Aspire AP School curriculum offers students a wealth of experiences so that they can make connections, build on their prior understanding and use the skills they have learnt in English and Maths across a range of contexts or subjects.

Reading and Comprehension is first and foremost the most important skill of all. The ability to read and understand is critical in the pursuit of knowledge retention and motivation to learn. Different subject areas have resources and texts with increasingly complex language structures. Creating opportunities to help students to access the subject vocabulary within non-fiction texts has huge benefits to ensure fluent readers. Put simply good readers know a little about a lot. We want to develop and expand our students' vocabulary because simply put, knowing more words makes you smarter. Around 90% of vocabulary is only regularly encountered in writing and is not commonly used in speech. So making up the 30 million word gap (identified by Hart and Risley) that many of our students have, will involve a clear focus on reading more books more often. This will be done through shared reading sessions to encourage a love for reading, extra text talk, making links and emphasising particular words as well as explaining concepts. Our reciprocal reading strategy will foster language that is more decontextualised by asking questions of the text, reflecting on what happened before and predicting what might happen next which moves students away from the 'here and now' so often used in modern communication.

Number skills are the essential building blocks that help us to make sense of how things are structured and work. Numeracy has an integral part to play in most subjects, sometimes in simple calculations other times in much more complex operations. We will endeavour to identify where number skills create opportunities for learning and where they can be strengthened in different contexts to help students master the skills and make connections across their learning. We also want to develop the disciplinary knowledge for maths to help our students think more like a mathematician. Content will be chosen to broaden and deepen problem solving skills and maths reasoning.

Development of effective group work allows students to learn from each other, they develop the skills of collaboration, co-operation and the sharing of ideas and information. Learning how to work well in a group is another skill that must be nurtured to support students to become effective team players. Group work requires a teacher to focus on the qualities and skills of each individual member of the group in terms of how well they contribute to the task that the group has been set. At Aspire AP School we see the development of this skill as a key success indicator for students who are going to transition on to a mainstream school setting or further learning opportunities.

Presentation skills - the development of written scripts and practising speaking and listening skills are essential in the pursuance of independent learning and the development of self-efficacy and confidence. Creating opportunities for students to make presentations using their own enquiry skills and group work skills deepens learning and helps to ensure knowledge enters the long-term memory.

The implementation of our curriculum at Aspire AP School will ensure that:

- Our curriculum is driven by the prior learning, and individual emotional, psychological and developmental needs of our students.
- It is clear what end points the curriculum is building towards and what students need to know and be able to do to reach those end points. Most secondary schools have units of progression which are normally distinct subjects however, these units could be projects or topic work (as in a primary model) as long as there is a clear end point and evidence of progression. Aspire AP School has the freedom to teach the curriculum units of progression either as distinct subject areas or as project or topic based work.
- The curriculum is planned and sequenced so that new knowledge and skills build on what has been taught before and towards its clearly defined end points.
- The curriculum schemata is securely linked and students understand how and why the links have been made. For example if students in term 1 are studying text like *The Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas* then history and geography lessons will be linked around the events and places of world war two to ensure students have the contextual knowledge required to fully access the text.
- There is a clear focus on English, Maths.
- Embeds a breadth and balance of subject areas where there is a strong focus on developing learning behaviours and the 4 key thinking skills outlined in the intent section.
- That we work hard at recognising which disciplinary knowledge and subject skills can be best developed so the focus isn't on content to be completed but knowledge and skills to be acquired (see appendices for more information). For example, an understanding of the concept of power has a very different meaning in History, Geography, RE, Science or PE. The concept however that power can be destructive, can drive change and can create, shape and form something new will aid understanding and allow for connections to be made by students across a range of learning experiences. In this way we hope to develop a schemata of interconnected knowledge and skills.
- Assessment generates the information we need to ensure that teachers plan and deliver effective lessons that aid the next steps for individual students.
- Delivery of the curriculum avoids overloading the working memory and allows for spaced repetition for overlearning through a spiralled approach to topics and the four thinking and learning skills.

The intended impact of our curriculum is to develop:

- A new mind-set for learning where students change their view of themselves and of their world.

- Secure progress in the development of Behaviours for Learning – Relationship with Self, Relationship with Others, Relationship with the Curriculum.
- Students who know more and remember more about the core learning skills we believe they need to develop to be effective learners and engage with learning in a mainstream school setting.
- Students who are confident and inquisitive deep thinkers who know their worth, challenge their own value system and respectfully engage with other's views.
- Students who love reading and are excited about extending their vocabulary because of the doors that open to them when they do.
- Making progress in Functional Skills. Filling in knowledge gaps in English and maths and where applicable taking functional skills assessments.

Independent School curriculum requirements

The Independent School Standards states that our curriculum must include experience in learning: linguistic; (covers English) mathematical; scientific; technological; human & social; physical; and aesthetic & creative. In addition, we must provide appropriate personal, social and health education, careers education, cultural appreciation and citizenship (including a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England and upholding the values of democracy, the law, individual liberty and mutual respect). Apart from English and maths, it is not expected that these will each be stand-alone subjects and can be mapped through the use of project-based or topic work.

Preventing radicalisation

We promote equality of opportunity and diversity for staff and pupils and do not tolerate prejudiced behaviour or attitudes. Staff work hard to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism by being open to discussion about these issues and are swift to identify and respond to vulnerable pupils.

Section 96 Qualifications - Functional Skills and AIM Awards suites of qualifications

Functional Skills and the AIM Awards suites of qualifications are part of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and are recognised within the DfE's list of approved qualifications (Section 96). They are measurable at Entry 1, 2, 3 and accredited at Levels 1 and 2. Although they carry performance points, these cannot be counted towards School Performance Measures. Where it is not possible for KS4 students to attain GCSEs or equivalents, Aspire AP School has chosen to deliver these qualifications as they provide accreditation in subject areas and at levels that are appropriate, accessible and achievable for our students. The revised Functional Skills contribute to the content of the English and maths GCSE's and achievement of them allows students to progress onto courses of study at FE colleges.

Functional Skills

We base our KS3/4 English teaching on the new Functional Skills criteria. We use 'SkillsForward' (www.skillsforward.co.uk), to support our internal teaching and assessment in these areas. 'SkillsForward' is an online tool that provides baseline assessment, individually tailored support learning resources and measures on-going progress. In maths students follow aspects of the national curriculum at KS3 as well as the functional skills criteria. Mapping has been completed that shows the overlap of the programmes of study and national curriculum topics are added for KS3 where they aren't covered by the functional skills syllabus.

In addition to using SkillsForward, we expect staff to use, create and share other resources for teaching the English and maths curriculum and to carry out teacher assessments.

For KS4 students, Functional Skills are externally accredited through the National Open College Network (NOCN). Students can be registered for assessments at Entry Levels and exams at Levels 1-2. We expect all capable KS4 students to be given opportunities to access assessments or exams in Functional English and maths at a level appropriate to them. Aspects of the Functional Skills curriculum can also be accredited through the AIM Awards units (see below).

Where students' levels of Literacy and Numeracy are 'pre-Entry', they will struggle to access the whole Functional Skills curriculum. These students will require specific interventions, e.g. literacy recovery programmes, in order that they can make progress and begin to access the wider curriculum.

AIM Awards suites of qualifications

Wherever GCSE programmes are not being followed, our subject-based curriculum utilises the AIM Awards suites of qualifications - AIMVOCs (vocational pathways), EMPLOY (employability) and PSD (personal and social development). Usually, accreditation would be for KS4 only, although this qualification is open to students of all ages. This qualification is portfolio based and can be accredited at Entry Level (E3), Level 1 or Level 2. Students complete units which carry credits. Numbers of credits build into qualifications of increasing sizes, starting with an Award (requiring 6 credits at L1) up to a Diploma (requiring 37 credits at L1). The units cover a wide range of suitable topics and work can be moderated soon after completion in most cases.

Access to Achievement/ Progress 8 subjects, including GCSE's and equivalents

Where local specialisms, resources and partnerships allow it, some Aspire AP School Centres may offer programmes that allow students to complete courses of study within the Progress/ Achievement 8 group of qualifications. So far, these have included subject specific GCSE's and BTEC's, which have typically been delivered in partnership with a referring school and through specialist volunteers or sessional workers. Students are usually registered for these qualifications through their school and Aspire AP School staff liaise closely with the school on aspects of administration, course

content, delivery and assessment. Currently, Aspire AP School are only approved (through Pearson/Edexcel) to directly deliver GCSE and BTEC qualifications at the School.

The School, if they wish, directly deliver the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) at L2, through BCS. This is where local resources are sufficient and students are of the required ability (i.e. capable of L2).

Reset Curriculum

The Reset curriculum is specifically designed to help students consider, develop and embed positive Learning Behaviours, facilitating a successful reintegration into mainstream school or college. Topics covered include looking at barriers in their relationships and behaviour, conflict resolution, peer relationships, teacher-student relationships and dealing with expectations from others. The Reset curriculum in its entirety forms a large part of the KS3 curriculum, alongside English, Maths and other required subject areas. Aspects of the Reset curriculum are also utilised within KS4 programmes to help develop positive Learning Behaviours that can be carried forward into their next stages of learning or employment.

Curriculum structure and content

The Aspire AP School develops its own timetable and teaching plans with support from the Leadership team. Over the course of a day/programme/week/term/year the timetable should facilitate delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum with a strong focus on English, Maths and development of Behaviours for Learning and thinking skills.

Elements to be included are:

- English/Literacy (including reading, writing, speaking and listening)
- Maths/Numeracy
- Behaviour for Learning Skills - including aspects of social and emotional learning, personal learning and thinking skills, working as teams and personal progression goals.
- ICT - some stand-alone teaching is recommended but not necessary as ICT is used throughout the curriculum.
- PSHCE - including issue-based learning (e.g. Drugs and Alcohol awareness), Health, Sex and Relationships and Citizenship.
- Human and Social – Which may include RE, cultural, historical, geographical.
- PE
- Aesthetic & Creative - could include music, art, dance, drama etc.
- Science
- Technology - could include food technology/cooking, motor mechanics, craft etc.

Curriculum enrichment

Our curriculum can be enriched by regular input from external volunteers and speakers. Good examples of this include: talks from the Police, Drugs and Alcohol Counselling, Sexual Health Counselling, Social Services, local charities such as homeless support and financial advice services. Young people take part in visits, trips, outdoor activities and work experience as well as reintegration programmes in school, college or further education provision.

Students at Aspire AP School have access to a variety of extra-curricular activities beyond the school day and in the holidays. These provide additional opportunities for students to learn, achieve and develop skills and grow in confidence and self-awareness. These include workshops in sport, ICT, media, arts and music. Aspire AP School also runs social and cultural trips and visits including weekend residencies within the UK and international trips which have in the past included Uganda and Ghana.

Suitability for all ages, and needs, including differentiation and progression

At Aspire AP School, groups of students may be of mixed ages and levels. While it is expected that most students within a group will follow the same overall programme of study, Individual Learning Plans (ILP's) should be utilised within planning to ensure that curriculum content is appropriately differentiated to address the individual needs, aptitudes, prior experiences and intended progression routes of each young person. Where a student has a Statement of special educational needs, or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), special consideration must be given to the special educational provision the LA considers necessary to meet the child's needs. Aspire AP School will liaise and plan carefully with the referring school/agency to ensure that these requirements are being met.

Related documents

- Templates for weekly timetables, medium-term planning (menus of activities) and long-term planning
- Centre-adapted long, medium and short-term planning
- SMSC Policy
- SEN Policy
- Marking Policy
- Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy
- Trips and Visits Policy
- Visitor Procedure
- Range of policies relating to Exams and Assessments
- Specifications and Standards for Functional Skills and AIM Awards Qualifications

Appendices – Subject specific outlines

Aspire AP School English Curriculum

Intent

Students will be equipped with skills, techniques and strategies in reading, writing, and speaking listening and communication. These will help them to succeed in a mainstream school classroom and to help them be more likely to succeed post-16 in the world of employment.

Implementation

Reading:

- Develop an appreciation and love of reading and be exposed to different kinds of texts, mostly those encountered in everyday life and work (e.g. newspapers, magazines, online articles, own reading book, class fiction text studied in more detail in a series of English lessons).
- Read these texts with accuracy.
- Understand the purpose, audience, and context of texts.
- Extract the main points and ideas from texts, and make comparisons across different texts.
- Understand how language, including figurative language, vocabulary choice, grammar, text structure and organisational features, shapes meaning.
- Be able to use a dictionary accurately, and use contents, index, and menus to locate information.

Writing

- Write accurately, fluently, and at length, for different purposes (e.g. personal and formal letters, persuasive texts, descriptive texts, scripts for presentations, and possibly a piece of creative writing when studying a class text).
- Write using the techniques and extended vocabulary learned in lessons and learned through reading.
- Plan, edit, and proof-read by: altering punctuation, spelling, and grammar; improving vocabulary and sentence structure; ensuring it meets the purpose for which it was written. This would sometimes be done with staff or peer support but increasingly independently.

Speaking, Listening and Communication:

- Give short presentations which they have prepared for, expressing their own ideas logically and with evidence.
- Participate in informal discussions from familiar contexts, structured discussions, and possibly formal debates.

- Give space for others to speak and build on what was said already, as well as asking and answering questions.
- Use paraverbal and nonverbal skills to convey meaning in the above situations: e.g. appropriate volume, tone, and pitch of voice; body language such as eye contact with the speaker and/or audience, and nodding/shaking head; noises of agreement.

Impact

Students have developed skills to improve their reading, writing, and speaking listening and communication. This gives them access to the full curriculum on offer, and they can apply these skills in mainstream school, including English lessons but also in other subjects, and in spoken interactions with peers and staff members throughout the school day. This will therefore help ease their reintegration from Aspire AP School to their next school setting. Students can also apply these skills later in an employment setting. They may also have achieved qualifications in English, which will make it more likely they will be able to progress to post-16 education, and they have built their confidence in their abilities in the subject.

Aspire AP School Maths Curriculum

Intent

Students will be equipped with skills, techniques and strategies to become **fluent** in the **fundamentals** of mathematics. The intent is to fill knowledge gaps where they exist through varied and frequent practice with increasingly complex problems over time, so that pupils develop conceptual understanding and the ability to recall and apply knowledge rapidly and accurately. Students should be able to **reason mathematically** by following a line of enquiry, conjecturing relationships and generalisations, and developing an argument, justification or proof using mathematical language. They should also **solve problems** by applying their mathematics to a variety of routine and non-routine problems with increasing sophistication, including breaking down problems into a series of simpler steps and persevering in seeking solutions. These last two aspects fit within our overarching thinking skills framework of managing information, problem solving and decision making

Implementation

Securing maths fundamentals (Functional Skills and aspects of National Curriculum):

- Consolidate their numerical and mathematical capability and extend their understanding of the number system and place value to include decimals, fractions and percentages, as well as demonstrating comparisons between different ratios and proportions.

- Use of common measures, shape and space: students are expected to be able to work out simple relationships between common units of measurement to define quantities, also involving mathematical terms for position and direction. They can apply and use calculations with common measures including money, time, length, weight and capacity. They can visualise, draw and describe 2-D and 3-D shapes and use properties of 2-D shapes in calculations
- Handle information and data: students are expected to be able to select, construct and interpret a range of statistical diagrams in various contexts; select and use methods and forms to present and describe outcomes. They can extract and interpret information from tables, diagrams, charts and graphs; apply simple statistics and recognise features of charts to summarise and compare sets of data; recognise and use the probability scale and interpret probabilities
- Move freely between different numerical, graphical and diagrammatic representations [for example, equivalent fractions, fractions and decimals and graphs]

Reason mathematically and solve problems

• students can demonstrate their ability in mathematical skills and their ability to apply these, through appropriate reasoning and decision making, to solve realistic problems of increasing complexity **Impact**

Students have developed their functional skills to improve their maths and have filled in learning gaps that would have the potential to limit their progress within the national curriculum and beyond to post 16 learning. They can apply these skills in mainstream school, including maths lessons but also other lessons that require the application of functional maths. This will therefore help ease their reintegration from Aspire AP School to their next school setting. Students can also apply these skills later in an employment setting.

Aspire AP School Science Curriculum

Intent

To develop scientific knowledge and disciplinary knowledge through the specific units of progression- biology, chemistry and physics.

- develop understanding of the nature, processes and methods of science through different types of science enquiries that help students to answer scientific questions about the world around them.
- Students are equipped to be able to think like scientists and take a scientific approach towards investigations.

Implementation - Working scientifically

Through the content in science lessons, students should be taught to develop the key thinking skills of effective enquiry, problem solving and decision-making and managing information:

Scientific attitudes

- pay attention to objectivity and concern for accuracy, precision, repeatability and reproducibility.
- understand that scientific methods and theories develop as earlier explanations are modified to take account of new evidence and ideas, together with the importance of publishing results and peer review.
- evaluate risks.

Experimental skills and investigations

- ask questions and develop a line of enquiry based on observations of the real world, alongside prior knowledge and experience.
- make predictions using scientific knowledge and understanding.
- select, plan and carry out the most appropriate types of scientific enquiries to test predictions, including identifying independent, dependent and control variables, where appropriate.
- use appropriate techniques, apparatus, and materials during fieldwork and laboratory work, paying attention to health and safety.
- make and record observations and measurements using a range of methods for different investigations; and evaluate the reliability of methods and suggest possible improvements.
- apply sampling techniques.

Analysis and evaluation

- apply mathematical concepts and calculate results.
- present observations and data using appropriate methods, including tables and graphs.
- interpret observations and data, including identifying patterns and using observations, measurements and data to draw conclusions.
- present reasoned explanations, including explaining data in relation to predictions and hypotheses.
- evaluate data, showing awareness of potential sources of random and systematic error.
- identify further questions arising from their results.

Measurement

- use and derive simple equations and carry out appropriate calculations.
- undertake basic data analysis including simple statistical techniques.

Impact

Students have developed core investigative and analysis skills and understand how to work scientifically.

They can apply these skills and knowledge to science lessons in their mainstream school setting.



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