

Curriculum Principles

Preparing young people for their world in their time

As a Trust, we believe passionately that every child/student:

1. Feels they belong

Feeling safe, happy and supported is the first priority in every setting. They are the foundations upon which the next five aims can be established and achieved.

2. Is challenged

Every day in lessons, in regular and one off activities and events, the children and students are encouraged to explore the unknown. By pushing their own boundaries, they learn confidence and resilience, have an increased desire to take on new opportunities and risks and, learn to accept both failures and successes.

3. Develops a love of learning

The interests and talents of each child/student, alongside the key skills in English and Maths as well as consideration of breadth, balance, supplemented by specialised provision, drives the curriculum, allowing all learners to flourish.

4. Has aspiration

Opportunities to widen their horizons locally, nationally and internationally ensures every child/student is engaged, has a sense of inquiry and continues to work with rigor, enthusiasm and a sense of purpose. In Church Schools a sense of spirituality infuses the culture and learning of the school.

5. Makes a unique contribution to their school

Independence, leadership, teamwork, a sense of community, of giving and taking and being the best that you can be, is developed at every educational stage.

6. Is ready for their world in their time

Every Trust leader and school leader must know and understand their schools, their children/students and their community, and, through regular monitoring and evaluation is able to adapt the curriculum to ensure it is preparing every learner for their next stage.

Acorn Education Trust was formed in 2014 to create a local solution to a national strategy. The Trust operates across two nursery schools, fourteen primary schools and three secondary schools, educating pupils from age two to 18. The curriculum across all Trust schools is designed to help students learn more, remember more and do more.



Acorn
Education Trust

Every school has a curriculum rooted in **high-expectations** and **ambition** for all pupils which reflects the **uniqueness of the school** by considering the knowledge and cultural capital that needs to be delivered through the whole curriculum offer

Acorn Education Trust schools deliver a **richly connected curriculum that is carefully sequenced** to allow for the acquisition of new knowledge in relation to prior knowledge. The curriculum will be progressive with **key knowledge, vocabulary and skills mapped out** to a granular level, which makes clear how learning will be revisited and linked to lessons in the future to ensure high levels of long-term retention and automaticity.

Reading is central to the curriculum and plays an integral role across all subjects. Schools should incorporate texts which are rich and varied. **Reading is key to developing independence as learners. Therefore,** where a child is struggling to learn to read, intervention is provided.

Rooted in inclusive practice, the curriculum is **designed to meet the needs of all**. Through adaptive teaching, learning is scaffolded to ensure ambition for **all learners to achieve, regardless of barriers or Special Educational Need or Disability**.

If a pupil has learnt the curriculum (learning refers to the outcome as committed facts, ideas and principles stored in long-term memory as part of a wider schema of domain specific knowledge, able to be retrieved with minimal cognitive effort) they have by definition made good or better progress and this is supported by **well-planned formative and summative assessment**.

Pupils have an entitlement to a **broad and balanced curriculum** enriched by a **wide range of experiences and opportunities** within and beyond the formal curriculum.

Curriculum Questions

1) How is knowledge broken down into substantive and disciplinary knowledge and what does this mean for the learning journey?

Our aim is to create global communicators: strong readers, writers and orators. We wish to develop subject specialists: scientists, historians, geographers, dancers, linguists, musicians, artists etc. We achieve this by focusing on the disciplinary knowledge required to become expert in these subject areas. We want to develop the disciplines so that all our pupils/students are ready for their next stage of education or employment. Alongside the teaching of these disciplines, we teach substantive knowledge; we ensure that pupils/students learn and remember more. The curriculum is carefully sequenced and cumulative so that both disciplinary and substantive knowledge are hard baked.

2) What does a richly connected curriculum look like in the shorter term? How do we embed knowledge into the long-term memory?

Across a unit of work, knowledge is built upon from previously learned content (prior knowledge from lessons and units already covered) that creates a cohesive narrative which the children can follow. Where appropriate, key knowledge or ideas from other parts of the curriculum are made explicit to the pupils to help them see how these relate to what they are learning. In this way the curriculum creates a web of richly interconnected content for all pupils to build their knowledge upon. We use current educational research to help create the right conditions for long term retention of knowledge. Most importantly, knowledge and ideas must be revisited at regular intervals to help strengthen their place in long term memory. Using techniques like interleaving, spaced practice, and providing carefully planned retrieval techniques support the strengthening of these ideas.

3) What role does assessment play?

Assessment helps a teacher hone, refine, rephrase, adjust or deepen the way they are presenting new information, and the direction of travel for the retrieval of past knowledge we expect to be remembered. In this sense, assessment is a barometer for how we spend our precious curriculum time and is a constant tool in the kit for teachers to deliver a personalised, responsive curriculum.

4) Do we ever deviate from the long-term curriculum plan? What happens when learners miss lessons or chunks of learning?

We acknowledge that missing lessons has a negative impact on learning, particularly for our most disadvantaged learners. So, we plan the curriculum to ensure that learning is regularly revisited. The careful sequencing and interleaving allows both disciplinary and substantive knowledge to be revisited regularly. We also build in regular RPE sessions into our curriculum (Recovery, Practice, Extension) where we revisit prior learning in more detail to help it become hard baked. We also focus on English and Maths and plan to catch-up students on any “unmissable content” missed. This is built into the curriculum.

5) How is teaching adapted in the case of misconceptions or where a learner has not learnt the curriculum? What adaptations are made to ensure all learners access an inclusive curriculum?

For a range of reasons (including but not exclusive to Special Educational Needs/Disability, disadvantage, poor attendance) a learner may not learn the full curriculum. In this case, steps will be taken to ensure that a student is supported to make progress. Teaching may be adaptive in order to include those with SEND by making reasonable adjustments in class. Short term intervention may be required to make rapid progress and/or catch-up. In some cases, learners require longer term provision to meet their needs. Any additional provision should not narrow the curriculum offer and should be closely monitored for impact using the graduated approach.