

## Curriculum Principles Overview

### Our Mission

Our Mission is to challenge educational and social disadvantage in the North. We use one sentence to do this;

**“all students have a great attitude, achieve and make the world a better place.”**

At Dixons all children are entitled to a curriculum and to the powerful knowledge<sup>1</sup> which will open doors and maximise their life chances:

- Our academies challenge social inequality by instilling shared and powerful knowledge
- Children need powerful knowledge to understand and interpret the world, and to think in new and unexpected ways. Without it, they remain dependent upon those who have it
- Shared and powerful knowledge is verified through learned communities e.g. universities, research and subject associations
- Powerful academic knowledge is cognitively superior to everyday knowledge, transcending and liberating students from their daily experience
- Shared knowledge is a foundation for a just and sustainable democracy. Citizens educated together, share an understanding of our common values, and can understand, cooperate and shape the world together<sup>2</sup>

### How?

We establish high-performing non-faith academies which maximise attainment, value diversity, develop character and build cultural capital.

- Our curriculum is led by, collaborated on and delivered by high-quality subject specialists, working in cross-cutting teams to create the richest narrative possible for their students. “A good curriculum will always be contested... The arguments that ensue show how difficult it is to arrive at their ‘best’, but if we don’t care for quality then the very thinking of our pupils will be dumbed down.”<sup>3</sup>
- The grammar of each subject is given high status; the specifics of what we want students to learn matter and the traditions of subject disciplines are respected.<sup>4</sup>
- Skills and understanding are seen as forms of knowledge and we do not believe that there are any real generic skills that can be taught outside of specific knowledge domains.
- The curriculum is planned vertically and horizontally giving thought to the optimum knowledge sequence for building secure schema.
- The curriculum is designed to be remembered in detail: to be stored in our students’ long-term memories so that they can later build on it forming ever wider and deeper schema. As a result, a good knowledge-rich curriculum embraces learning from cognitive science about memory, forgetting and the power of retrieval practice.
- The curriculum is owned by students from all faiths and backgrounds, not by any one. The selected content conforms to shared cultural agreements of what is considered valuable to know. It is the entitlement of all and we resist parental opt-outs.
- The curriculum embraces and values the most powerful knowledge from a variety of cultures and traditions.
- At each phase, the curriculum focuses on closing gaps, early intervention, and developing the core literacy and numeracy skills for success at that level.
- The curriculum introduces students to new experiences and powerful knowledge beyond the classroom and outside the academy to broaden their horizons and to prepare them fully for later life.
- Curriculum breadth and academic rigour are key to our mission: “Imparting broad knowledge to all children is the single most effective way to narrow the gap between demographic groups through schooling.”<sup>5</sup>

## Culture and Values

Both in and out of the classroom, the curriculum builds on the Trust's values of hard work, diligence, and resilience necessary for success in life, these are shared through each Academies own values, Dixons Manningham's are:

- Achievement
- Integrity
- Unity

The values underpin all decisions and inform the curriculum and the behaviour policy in order to embed a powerful culture of learning:

### Achievement

Achievement encompasses our desire to get better; academically, physically and socially. We utilise a range of straplines to embed this:

- **Every second counts**
- **No excuses / opt out**
- **100% every day**
- **Practice makes better**

We hold students to account through our behaviour policy, non-compliance is not an option. DMn teachers eliminate complacency and build a strong learning attitude by instilling good habits in students. This is our duty to our students. It is through relentless consistency that we build these habits; e.g. allowing a student to not hand in homework undermines the good habits necessary for our students to succeed. We teach students to recognise and focus on the actions they can control to influence outcomes, rather than circumstances they cannot, we empower them.

### Integrity

Integrity encompasses our personal responsibility to **do the right thing, because it's the right thing to do!** We utilise this motto to build a strong moral compass that guides us in our thoughts and deeds to make our academy safe and secure for everyone.

We provide regular opportunities for students to take responsibility through helping others, making the academy a better place and supporting decision making.

DMn teachers show great integrity in developing the whole child through developing intrinsic motivation, good eating and exercise habits, taking responsibility for our actions and our duty to help and support others and the environment we live in.

### Unity

Unity helps us to have a strong sense of belonging, we are harmonious and show respect to everyone. We work together for the greater good of all. Straplines are utilised to embed this value:

- **We are all kind**
- **We help one another**
- **We show respect to everyone**

Through using appreciations we embed the value to create a strong sense of belonging and "Team DMn". We teach students to recognise the many different groups that they belong to and how their values have a common thread. Teachers build unity every day, we utilise resources that show the diversity of the UK, we use debate in order to consider other peoples points of view in order to deconstruct stereotypes, we use collaboration as a vehicle to support one another and build respect.

*1 M Young, D Lambert et al., Knowledge and the Future School: Curriculum and Social Justice, London, 2014*

*2 These bullet points are adapted from work by Carolyn Roberts, Headteacher, Thomas Tallis School*

*3 M Robinson, "Curriculum: An Offer of What the Best Might Be", Journal of the Chartered College of Teaching, Sept 2018*

*4 This and the next three bullet points are adapted from 2018 blogs by Tom Sherrington <https://teacherhead.com/>*

*5 E D Hirsch, The Knowledge Deficit: Closing the Shocking Education Gap for American Children, New York, 2006*