



# MacIntyre Academies Venture Academy

## Curriculum Policy

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## Curriculum Policy

### The Intent of our Curriculum

- At Venture Academy we offer a curriculum that meets both the needs and aspirations of our children and young people. We do this within the current statutory framework and do not disapply the expectations of the national curriculum. However, the way we deliver our curriculum may look very different to other schools.
- We provide curriculum provision for pupils aged 9 - 16 (key stages 2-4).
- At Venture Academy all pupils have an EHCP, which identifies them as having autism and/or additional Social Emotional and Mental Health needs.
- We know that to succeed young people need our compassion and we ensure that we maintain compassion by providing excellent training and support to staff and by using a whole school approach.

### Our Compassion Model

#### How we teach - Compassionate Teaching Principles

1. Always empower, never disempower
2. Provide unconditional positive regard
3. Maintain high expectations
4. Check assumptions, observe and question
5. Be a relationship coach
6. Provide guided opportunities for helpful participation
7. Use person centred strategies

#### What we teach - A Compassionate Curriculum

- **Strategy 1:** Safety, connection and assurance of wellbeing
- **Strategy 2:** Emotional and Behavioural self-regulation academic success

These principles foster positive relationships between pupils and staff and support our young people to be more resilient.

We believe that a pupil who is motivated, encouraged and made to feel worthwhile, and given the appropriate specialist support, will thrive.

Venture Academy aims to equip pupils with the skills and knowledge to develop key learning and life skills that prepare them ready for life. We aim to create:

- Successful learners who enjoy learning; make at least good progress and achieve.
- Confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives.
- Responsible citizens who can make a positive contribution to society.

We ensure our curriculum is current, relevant and engaging to the pupils within our school, taking account of British values of democracy, tolerance, mutual respect and individual liberty.

A curriculum which:

- Creates an aspirational high achievement culture.
- Considers individual needs and learning styles.
- Raises standards of attainment.
- Allows everyone to experience success.

Our goal is for all our pupils to develop holistically, ensuring progress in both academic learning and in managing their own emotional needs.

At Venture Academy, pupils' access:

- The National Curriculum that provides both academic rigour and enrichment through visits, visitors and focus days.
- Therapeutic provision, personalised to their individual needs with the outcome of removing barriers to learning.
- Teaching and learning that considers different learning styles and personalisation for pupils.
- The Arts, to develop skills, interests and confidence.
- Physical activities, to develop co-ordination and teamwork as well as promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Off-site visits and activities to develop pupil's social interactions, independence, self-reliance, confidence and skills for the future.
- Extra-curricular activities during lunchtime such as art, engineering and sports, to develop their interests.

## **Breadth and Balance**

Our curriculum is developmental, ensuring prior learning is reinforced and new learning increases in cognitive complexity and greater depth. Pupils will see the same topics throughout their learning journey, with each encounter increasing in complexity and reinforcing previous learning. We recognise that our pupils arrive with gaps in their learning which impact on their ability to develop new skills and knowledge. Our school systems and assessments aim to identify these gaps promptly and teachers then plan carefully to address these learning gaps, at the same time as building pupil confidence in learning.

### **Key Stage 2:**

- The National Curriculum is used to plan, teach and assess pupils in Key Stage 2, in all subjects.
- Pupils are taught throughout the week in individual lessons for English, Maths, Science, Phonics (where required), Reading, PE (including swimming), Cooking, Forest School, Humanities, Art, PSHE and Personal Development.
- Our aim is to empower staff to ensure that skills can be taught in the most creative, current and relevant contexts for pupils and can be led by the cohorts' interests and needs.

### **Key Stage 3:**

- We operate a two-year Key Stage 3, delivering a broad and balanced curriculum which is clearly mapped to the National Curriculum. Years 7 and 8 will provide a clear transition into a secondary model of specialist teachers for core subjects and an introduction into accreditations through WJEC options. We believe that the essential work around attachment and relationships within Years 7 and 8 will enable pupils to approach Year 9 confidently and positively. Year 9 will have a focus of transitioning into Examinations where students have the opportunity to sit their Entry Level exams in English, Maths and Science.
- Pupils are taught throughout the week in individual lessons for English, Maths, Science, PE (including swimming), Cooking, Forest School, Humanities, Art, PSHE and Personal Development.

### **Key Stage 4:**

- We operate a two-year Key Stage 4. We ensure pupils access enrichment days termly to ensure breadth of experience and preparation for the wider world.

- Pupils will access a core offer of working towards accreditations in Maths, English Language, English Literature and Science. Our core offer also includes PE, PD and PSHE. Pupils choose options from BTEC accreditations in either: Hospitality and Tourism, Health and Social, Digital Media, Sport, Land Based Studies, Business Studies, Performing Arts, Creative Arts and Construction.
- It is our aspiration that pupils attain GCSE's, although pathways to alternative accreditations and Entry Level qualifications are available for pupils who require this personalisation.

## **The Implementation of our Curriculum**

### **What does the school's curriculum include?**

Venture Academy provides full-time education for pupils of compulsory school age. We use subject matter that is appropriate to the ages and aptitude of the pupils, including those with additional special educational needs. Primary aged pupils (those in Columbus class) learn in the main with 1 teacher across most subjects in order to have an experience on a par with their mainstream peers and to give them a sense of consistency and nurture. This also means that this group move around the building less than their secondary aged peers. In all other classes, there is an expectation that subject specialists lead the majority of learning, particularly in core subjects and that pupils have a greater experience of moving between lessons and to specialist learning environments on or off site.

### **What Educational Regulations and Legislation Affect the School?**

Venture Academy follows the National Curriculum in order to ensure that our pupils are not disadvantaged when they leave school for college, training or employment. This means that our pupils cover programmes of study that are comparable to those of pupils in mainstream schools. We are bound by the SEND code of practice in our approach to adapting the curriculum to meet the send needs of pupils.

### **Metacognition**

Metacognition is the awareness of our own thoughts and thinking processes. Research suggests that working purposefully with pupils on learning how they learn, where they struggle and why, can be empowering for any child. According to the Education Endowment Fund Research an increased awareness of metacognition can lead to more effective self-regulated learning and should include explicit teaching about:

- Cognition – the mental process involved in knowing, understanding, and learning
- Metacognition – often defined as 'learning to learn'; and
- Motivation – willingness to engage our metacognitive and cognitive skills.

We are using metacognition teaching processes with our pupils and is proving to be a successful addition to our teaching practices and pupil reflection of their work.

'Metacognition and self-regulation approaches to teaching support pupils to think about their own learning more explicitly, often by teaching them specific strategies for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning'

### **English/Literacy**

We teach linguistic skills, knowledge and understanding primarily through English and our use of Speech and Language Support and Guidance. The aim is to develop pupils' communication skills and increase their command of language through listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Our English curriculum follows a pathway into GCSE and other externally accredited examinations and has been designed to support all of our pupils needs to provide an understanding of the written and spoken word effectively in preparation for moving into college, vocational training or employment.

Naturally, English skills are employed across the curriculum in a wide variety of other subjects, but to help pupils understand how language is used socially and address elements within some pupil's EHCP's, where for example pupils might have a Speech and Language diagnosis, or a communication and interaction difficulty, those pupils have access to individual or small group Speech and Language Therapy.

We use a Dyslexia screener to assess pupils that show signs of Dyslexia. If the screener identifies signs of Dyslexia, we will then refer to an external Dyslexia specialist who completes a full assessment and provides recommendations of support and adjustments that we can put in place as a school staff and support parents/carers can provide at home to support learning.

## Phonics

We use a synthetic phonics programme called Read, Write, Inc. by Ruth Miskin ([Read-Write-Inc.-Curriculum.pdf](#)). We believe that a solid foundation in phonics, reading fluency and writing are the fundamental building blocks for confident readers and pupils.

With Read Write Inc. phonics pupils will:

- Reach the expected standard of the phonics screening check
- Develop reading fluency and read with comprehension
- Develop co-operative behaviour and articulate their ideas and understanding
- Spell and write with confidence.

## Fresh Start Intervention:

We have introduced a reading, writing and spelling intervention for key stages 3-4 to support pupils that have gaps in their phonic knowledge, reading, writing and spelling skills.

## Reading

All of our pupils have daily reading time of 20 minutes. We encourage pupils to choose reading material that is based around an interest i.e. book, newspaper, magazine, comic book etc. to promote reading for pleasure and instil a love of reading.

## Maths

Lessons in Mathematics are designed to help pupils make calculations; understand and appreciate relationships and patterns in number and space; and to develop their capacity to think logically and express themselves clearly with number and abstract calculations. We have introduced White Rose, a curriculum that builds a solid foundation in mathematics. Pupils' will gain a deep understanding of mathematics and enjoy solving mathematical problems. White Rose will support pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics and is developed in a variety of ways, including the use of concrete materials, practical activities, problem solving, exploration, and discussion. Time is built into the timetable for maths assessments and for recapping at the end of each term. The topics into which the curriculum is broken down are known as the White Rose small steps. Mathematical skills are also reinforced, extended and developed in more concrete, practical ways through other areas of the curriculum in subject such as PE, Science and Food Technology.

## Science

Venture Academy uses the White Rose Science scheme in key stages 2-3 to provide a structured and coherent programme of learning that builds progressively through each year.

White Rose Science provides engaging lesson content in the same progressive, step-by-step method as the White Rose Maths scheme, which are both proving to be very successful with the pupils' and their engagement.

Practical experiences of working scientifically are integral to the White Rose scheme. We aim to inspire and excite children with such activities so that they view scientific learning positively.

The National Curriculum Programme of Study for Science describes a sequence of knowledge and concepts, processes and methods. This sequence of knowledge and concepts is arranged as

progressive blocks of key ideas in biology, chemistry and physics, alongside a progression in the skills of working scientifically.

The conceptual ideas in Biology, Chemistry and Physics build on each other and pupil's need to develop a strong understanding of each set of ideas in order for the next set to make sense and for them to make progress.

Science lessons focus on increasing pupils' knowledge and understanding of nature, materials and forces. We also develop the skills associated with investigating science as a process of enquiry, for example, observing, forming hypotheses, conducting experiments and recording findings. Time is built into the timetable for Science assessments and for recapping at the end of each term. Areas of science in other subjects are also reinforced in PSHE, Relationship & Sex Education, PE, Food Technology and Design Technology.

### **Creative and Technical**

Food Technology is an important part of the curriculum, helping pupils learn how to develop, plan and prepare food. The process of working safely with household kitchen tools, equipment and materials to produce good quality products through a process of evaluation also forms a vital part of Food Technology.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is integrated across the curriculum. Pupils' have access to a shared area, where they can save, edit, review and receive instant feedback from class teachers regarding their work. All classrooms have an interactive whiteboard and are used when in a variety of ways dependent on the lesson.

We provide art lessons for all year groups, as a creative curriculum provides a therapeutic outlet for the diversity of needs in our school. Pupils can also be referred for Art and Music Therapy, if this is identified as an intervention that will support their emotional wellbeing.

The school has a comprehensive range of software available for pupils, including specialist programmes to support literacy and numeracy, online learning packages, intervention programmes, AAC support through "Communication in Print" and other subject specific software to support teaching and learning throughout the curriculum up to and including GCSE.

### **Humanities**

This area of the curriculum focuses on people, cultures and their environment, and how human action has influenced events and conditions. In our school, these issues are mainly covered by our Humanities and PSHE curriculum, incorporating Geography, History and Religious Studies. Other areas of human and social interaction, including intra and inter-personal interaction, are dealt with in PSHE, RSE, Tutor time and through 1:1 or small group sessions with our Compassionate Schools Coach. Human and Social Interaction in particular are supported through the holistic curriculum, which covers both taught elements of delivery and other facilitated opportunities, such as, therapeutic support and work with the pastoral team using our restorative approach. This plays a key role in developing pupils' understanding of the social impact they have on themselves and other people around them.

Venture Academy recognises the importance of equality. As such, we promote equality both through the formal school day curriculum, and the holistic curriculum. This supports and reinforces learning and helps pupils connect information and experiences.

The nature of the special needs of our pupils means that they can make themselves vulnerable to many of the issues identified in the "Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 23". This means that we need to make pupils aware of a range of safeguarding matters, for example, around the matters such as Sexual Exploitation, Radicalisation, and Online Safety in order to help them better protect themselves now and in the future. To achieve this, we focus on these matters through PSHE, where appropriate through visiting speakers, links with our local community police team and through some key topics and 'safety awareness' focus weeks across the curriculum.

Similarly, we look to promote British values with all of our pupils, focusing on:

- Democracy.
- The rule of law.
- Individual liberty.
- Mutual respect.
- Tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs

Again, this work is achieved through assemblies, visiting speakers, special whole school awareness days, visiting theatre groups, workshops and, more formally, through PSHE, SMSC, RSE and Character Education, which underpins everything that we do and our ethos as a school.

## Character Education

We have begun by introducing Character Education into the PSHE curriculum, through teaching core values, what they mean and how they can apply these values to their everyday lives. Character education is ultimately about facilitating the growth of all pupils into the best version of themselves. It is about pupil's understanding that their worth, their value and most importantly their potential, extend far beyond any academic grade or target. It is about pupils discovering what they care about and what they stand for. It is about developing those skills and qualities which will enable every pupil, to act as their greatest selves in times of success and adversity. To make healthy, positive and safe choices independently and be 'Ready for Life' when they move on from Venture.

- On a **personal** level for pupils, knowing who they are and how they matter gives them a greater level of confidence and self-worth. They are their own leaders, their own driving force, fuel, and their own champions. This increased empowerment and fulfilment results in happier, more inspired and ambitious individuals, with improved well-being and mental health – two of the greatest barriers to success and flourishing among children and young people.
- On a **social** level, such individuals are more empathetic, tolerant, understanding and patient with others, resulting in greater community cohesion through healthier, more fulfilling personal and professional relationships.
- On a **societal** level, empowered, ambitious, grateful individuals give back to the world. They understand that true fulfilment goes beyond personal gains, and are more likely to want to share their talents and wealth, in whatever forms they take, with others for the betterment of humanity.

## Physical Education

Through Physical Education, we aim to develop pupils' physical control and co-ordination, as well as their tactical skills and imaginative responses. As with all curriculum areas, the process of evaluating presentation and performance is key to teaching and learning. Pupils are also expected to learn about the basic principles of fitness and health, meaning that pupils develop an understand in the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle by finding a sport/s they can pursue either as a leisure activity or at a competitive level. In addition to PE, sport, swimming and a school football team, the school delivers Forest Schools lessons to all year groups in order to support them to develop their independence skills, social skills and team work skills.

## How does the school ensure that its curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced?

The breadth and balance of the curriculum is dictated by guidelines from the Department of Education. The Department sets out the clear, full and statutory entitlement to learning for all pupils, which means that a balance must be maintained in order to achieve full coverage of all of the elements of the curriculum. We provide adequate teaching hours across the week in all key stages to meet curriculum expectations.

## What curriculum options does our school provide?

Our school provides a range of externally accredited qualifications as options at either **Entry Level** or **GCSE** for key stages 3 and 4.

There are a range of compulsory subjects including English, Maths, Science, Reading, PE, PD, PSHE, including Relationship, Sex and Health Education for all of our pupils from key stages 2-4. **BTEC** options include; Performing Arts, Digital Media, Health and Social Care, Hospitality and Tourism, Home Cooking, Construction, Business, Land Based Studies, Creative Art, and Sport. Other curriculum offers include: Art, Achieve accreditations, Duke of Edinburgh Awards through Personal Development, Food Technology, Forest School and Swimming. **WJEC** options include; Humanities, Art and Digital Media which are offered from KS2-KS4.

## Access to Work-Related Learning

We want every pupil to go on to a college placement, internship, vocational training or employment after they leave Venture. To this end, we have our own independent careers and college advisor who works with each pupil in Years 9, 10 and 11. The advisor also liaises with Further Education Colleges in each pupil's local area in order to facilitate a smooth transition from school to college as pupils move on. As part of this, the advisor is invited to attend annual reviews for all pupils in these year groups to identify what they would like to do after leaving our school.

Work experience is part of the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11, who will have a minimum of 3 months' work experience.

## The Impact of our Curriculum

### How will the school monitor and evaluate the work set for the pupils?

The work of all pupils is adapted and differentiated where necessary. This encourages success and allows pupils to achieve in every area of the curriculum. Work is marked at regular intervals in line with the marking and feedback policy. When work is marked, comments and feedback are given to each child in a way that is yet supportive. The aim is to help pupils to see what they need to do to make further progress. The school has recently invested in SOLAR for schools in order to track impact data for all year groups.

Additionally, we monitor the progress of pupils against their expected EHCP outcomes through monitoring their MPP's, Solar data, teacher assessment and reviewing this formally in the Annual Review process. Our Graduated Approach of Assess, Plan, Do and Review is recorded and monitored using a system called 'Provision Map' which provides a Learning Plan for each pupil and allows us to closely monitor a pupils targets/outcomes according to their individual needs, the provision and interventions being used to support their learning/needs and to measure the impact. We communicate termly to parents/carers about pupil performance across the curriculum in either a 1-page format (Autumn and Spring) and a longer format report in the summer term as our End of Year report.

Attendance, behaviour and incident data is reviewed regularly by the pastoral and SLT and at times could indicate the need to review the timetable or curriculum offer of an individual or group.

### How does the school maintain high curriculum standards?

Venture Academy employs qualified teachers, wherever possible, to deliver core subjects. To maintain their subject knowledge teachers, receive in-service training. In-service training also focuses on helping teachers and Teaching Assistants to addresses some of the extra difficulties that our pupils face, such as Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Speech and Language, Autism, and Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties, including those that are the result of ACE's and/or trauma. This approach helps teachers to adapt their plans and delivery methods, and to effectively identify appropriate levels of support through classroom assistants, IT support, specialist therapists, or other physical resources. Venture Academy employs a team of teaching assistants and higher-level teaching assistants who support our pupils as individuals and within groups.

Venture Academy only uses nationally recognised examinations, such those identified above. It also clearly sets pupils a level of expectation, and ensures that they are not disadvantaged in any way by attending a special school. This means that when pupils have the same experience as their friends and family at home, they are less likely to feel marginalized or disadvantaged. In order to decrease anxiety and stress, Pupils taking examinations are given mock exams so that they can realistic experience of what is to come. It also means that they can then discuss strategies to help them cope and be more successful. We also ensure that where necessary we apply for concessions for pupils who may require adaptations to the exams procedures in order to ensure success.

### **How is Teaching and Learning Monitored and Evaluated Throughout the School?**

A range of methods are used to monitor teaching and learning in the school. For example, teachers are observed on a number of occasions throughout the year by the leadership team, Senior Teachers and where appropriate LAB members and/or external stakeholders.

'Book looks' are carried out termly in order for leaders and managers to triangulate the content of pupils work books, with the learning plans, pupil targets and the quality of teaching observed on observations and learning walks.

We are using an online assessment system called 'GL Assessments' to assess pupils in the core subjects of English, Maths, Science, Reading and PASS (Pupil Aptitudes to Self and School) to provide a baseline of prior learning and to highlight any specific gaps that need to be filled. Our assessment package will also be completed for any new pupil starting at Venture. This allows for curriculum planning to be targeted and if required bespoke individual learning plans to be put in place. Following the 'Graduated Response' of Assess, Plan, Do and Review, we will review and re-assess when and where required and targeted interventions put in place where necessary. Our assessment package also includes; Dyslexia and Dyscalculia screeners, which will be completed if other assessments highlight these areas of need or teachers/TA's notice any signs of these difficulties in lessons.

In addition, we assess all pupil's attainment and progress by using a range of data through Solar, including attainment in relation to National Curriculum guidance or course criteria, marking of pupil's work, target-setting information, teacher observations, formative and summative assessments. We also use 'Star Marking' (S-Strength, T-Target, A-Answer, R-Response) fortnightly in pupils work books to focus on achievements and targets of how they can improve their work and participate in feedback with teachers.

Finally, we assess each pupil throughout the term through teacher assessments and formal qualification assessments for each Programme of Study. This data and information are used to adapt and improve teaching, learning and the curriculum planning, as required. These evaluations and assessments also allow us to measure rates of attainment and progress from the pupil's initial baseline assessments which took place soon following admission. The data is used in a similar way to measure the progress of individual year groups, attainment by gender, the comparative attainment of LAC children, attainment in relation to ethnic diversity, and attainment by subject.