

### Curriculum vision/rationale

#### **School vision:**

*For all students to achieve beyond their personal expectations and prior attainment, and to experience an enjoyable and outstanding education*

#### **What are we trying to achieve?**

#### **Why are they learning what they are?**

We have spent time as school leaders contemplating what our students need to know to be successful in life. Our vision is for all students to achieve beyond their personal expectation and prior attainment and to experience an enjoyable and outstanding education. This vision has been carefully created to raise aspirations. We want our students to aspire to go to University if that is appropriate for them, and if not for them to choose a career that is challenging, fulfilling and economically secure and develop the knowledge, skills, and qualifications to be successful in that career. Blackburn with Darwen historically was a prosperous region with textiles and mining forming most of the job market. This market has declined and resulted in Blackburn with Darwen being one of the most deprived local authority districts in the UK. There are significantly less economically active citizens in BwD than the UK average, 12.4% of the Authority's population have no qualifications compared to 7% nationally, and the average weekly salary is much lower than the National average. There are opportunities however, the building of the M65 motorway in 1997 has brought business and investment to the town. One of the problems for Blackburn residents in recent years is that they have not been sufficiently qualified to take advantage of these opportunities. Only 29% of BwD residents hold qualifications at NVQ level 4 or above (Degree level) compared to 39% nationally. In addition, a culture of worklessness (16.3% workless households compared to 14.3% nationally) can mean for some student's education is not always seen as a viable route to a better future. The evidence is clear, this lack of qualifications on average in BwD residents means that the average percentage of BwD residents employed in Group 1-3 jobs; managers, professionals, technical is 37 compared to a national average of 47%. We want to change this for our young people. Our curriculum is based on 6 curriculum touchstones:

- An emphasis on the core subjects of English, Maths and Science. We must ensure that our students are literate, numerate and understand how the world around them works.
- A strong emphasis on an academic core including the ebacc subjects that develop cultural capital and prepare students for life in a modern democratic country. The ebacc subjects have been shown to have several benefits including being essential to study at degree level and improving access to University. Russell group universities favour facilitating subjects (Ebacc subjects). Research has also shown that the study of these subjects has a direct impact on performance in English and Maths
- A belief that the curriculum should be as broad as possible for as long as possible. We want to develop rounded individuals. We want to develop students who want to make the world a

better place. To do this our students need to learn knowledge, skills, concepts, and attitudes in areas such as mathematics, literacy and linguistics, science, and technology but also aesthetic and creative, human, and social, moral, and physical. To not involve pupils sufficiently in all these areas and elements is to leave their education lacking in some respects.

- A commitment to giving students the opportunity to study the arts and technology for as long as possible but with a commitment to allow students to personalise their diet as they move through the school. The arts are good for the soul. We promote creativity across the curriculum but within the Arts there exists the opportunities for students to experience the sheer joy of creating a piece of music, a painting, or an expression in the form of dance or drama. The study of the arts is good for the mental wellbeing of our young people. Technology has a value way beyond providing young people with a career path into manufacturing. We are an increasingly technological society and technological literacy is essential for our young people to understand the world around them. The study of technology also helps students to relate subjects such as maths and science to the real-world giving relevance to the whole curriculum.
- To develop students personal, social and health and health education including high quality careers advice and independent guidance.
- To develop student's entrepreneurial skills and qualities

This policy links to our policies on Equality, Teaching and Learning, SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and our procedures regarding Homework and Assessment.

## **What do we want for them by the time we leave?**

### **What destinations and next steps are we preparing them for?**

Any research of employability skills reveals that employers want a range of soft skills and hard skills (actual subject specific knowledge and skills achieved through qualifications)

In terms of those hard skills, we are committed to preparing our students for the world of work or employment. There is growth in the employment market in the North of England but there is also additional competition for jobs. Analysis of growth indicates that by 2022 half of jobs will be managerial, professional, or associate professional. These will require candidates to hold relevant qualifications at Level 4 or above. Technology will pervade the job market and boundaries between sectors will begin to break down requiring flexibility in candidates. 40% of employers prefer students to hold a degree in STEM (Science, Technology, engineering, and Maths) subjects and 19% expressed a preference for candidates with a Business-related degree. We are committed to raising aspirations and supporting our young people to go to university where that is appropriate. Through this we will facilitate their route into those jobs. Students will need, and we will provide access to those facilitating subjects at GCSE (Ebacc) to increase their chances of going to and staying at university. We will also offer a broad and relevant suite of qualifications at KS4 that give students the opportunity to continue their study of the Arts but adding the opportunity for our students to gain qualifications in technology and business qualifications.

The world economic forum has identified 16 core skills that it has split into 3 different areas:

#### **Skills**

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Scientific literacy
- ICT literacy

- Financial literacy
- Cultural and civic literacy

### **Abilities**

- Communication
- Creativity
- Critical thinking
- Collaboration

### **Qualities**

- Curiosity
- Initiative
- Perseverance/grit
- Adaptability
- Leadership
- Social cultural awareness

Further to this recent employer surveys have indicated that literacy and numeracy skills are vital. A weakness in these skills can affect performance in everyday tasks. For example, the ability to draw out information effectively from written texts and instructions, produce written communication, or work through calculations and make sense of numerical data.

### **What are our student's needs?**

With these factors in mind, we have formulated our curriculum touchstones. The touchstones form our strategic aims for curriculum underpinned by research. Our curriculum directly supports these aims. We know this because we have deliberately designed our KS3 and 4 curriculums with the touchstones at the forefront of our thinking. You will see from our curriculum map on page 4 that the curriculum is based directly on the 6 touchstones; 1. The core of maths and English, 2. The Ebacc subjects, 3. Breadth, 4. A focus on the Arts and technology, 5. Personal, social and Health education and 6. The entrepreneurial skills and qualities that an Aldridge school prizes. In addition, we have looked carefully at our cohort of students. We are a truly comprehensive school that draws students from a wide variety of backgrounds and with different ability profiles. We are committed to preparing these students for the next phase of their lives and we actively encourage the aspiration to go on to Higher education. We are proud of our tradition as the former Darwen Grammar school and an emphasis on high academic standards will always be at the heart of what we do. We recognise that some of our young people need support with:

- Having high aspirations for themselves
- Ensuring that they have a good standard of literacy
- Developing resilience, self-discipline, and initiative
- Developing a growth mind set
- Developing confidence

**How does our curriculum specifically prepare students for their next steps?  
How does it deliver the curriculum touchstones? How does it address the needs of OUR learners?**

**Key stage 3 curriculum – subjects and allocation of hour-long periods (except Vale Values @ 25 min)**

| <b>Subject</b>                     | <b>Year 7</b>      | <b>Year 8</b>      | <b>Year 9</b>      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| English                            | 5                  | 5                  | 4                  |
| Maths                              | 4                  | 4                  | 4                  |
| Science                            | 4                  | 4                  | 4                  |
| History                            | 2                  | 2                  | 2                  |
| Geography                          | 2                  | 2                  | 2                  |
| MFL                                | 2                  | 2                  | 2                  |
| Creatives                          | 2                  | 2                  | 2                  |
| Performing Arts                    | 1                  | 1                  | 2                  |
| RE                                 | 6 x Drop down days | 6 x Drop down days | 6 x Drop down days |
| PE                                 | 2                  | 2                  | 2                  |
| ICT                                | 1                  | 1                  | 1                  |
| Vale Values - SRE/Citizenship/PSHE | 125 mins           | 125 mins           | 125 mins           |
|                                    | 25                 | 25                 | 25                 |

#### **Key Stage 4**

| <b>Subject</b>                     | <b>Year 10</b> | <b>Year 11</b> |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| English                            | 5              | 5              |
| Maths                              | 5              | 5              |
| Science                            | 5              | 5              |
| Option A                           | 3              | 3              |
| Option B                           | 3              | 3              |
| Option C                           | 3              | 3              |
| PE                                 | 1              | 1              |
| RE                                 | 6 x 5 PA       | 6 x 5 PA       |
| Vale Values - SRE/Citizenship/PSHE | 125 minutes    | 125 minutes    |

#### **The touchstones in practice:**

##### **Touchstone 1**

*An emphasis on the core subjects of English, Maths and Science. We must ensure that our students are literate, numerate and understand how the world around them works.*

The curriculum touchstones shape our curriculum at Key Stage 3 and 4. We are committed to a strong focus on the Core. We give more time for English Maths and Science at Key Stage 3 and 4. This is

intentional as we are seeking to prepare students for life after they leave us considering the views of those in further education and employers.

To support our aim to develop students who are literate and effective communicators we explicitly provide more time for English. Students have five periods of English each week and in Key Stage 3 follow the ARK Mastery curriculum. This curriculum has been developed in line with DFE (Department for Education) aims and has been proven to enhance student progress. Students who follow Ark Mastery make four months more progress than students not following the programme. The curriculum is knowledge based and teaches grammar and vocabulary acquisition explicitly. It is unashamedly focused on the study of classic high-quality texts such as Shakespeare's "The Tempest", Jane Eyre, and Oliver Twist. The English curriculum is designed so that every child can achieve challenging goals. Our lessons include explicit definitions of key learning that students must be proficient in before they move on. The key knowledge and skills are sequenced carefully, and students practice and apply new learning in different contexts. The English Mastery programme is rooted in the latest cognitive and educational research.

Whilst we are committed to students following a broad, balanced, and rich curriculum that has Ebacc at its heart, we recognise that many students do not have the requisite literacy skills to effectively access the curriculum. The GCSE Geography paper has a reading age of 19. 22% of our current year 7 have a reading age below 9. **THIS WILL NEED TO BE RETESTED IN SEPTEMBER TO GET THE NEW ACCURATE %.**

These pupils will be identified using GL Reading Assessments. Further testing will identify the specific area of need. Many of these pupils also have a specific learning difficulty, a speech and language difficulty or a global learning delay. We have two qualified members of staff working in these areas and pupils will be withdrawn to work on the appropriate programme for them, either in small groups or one-to-one. Individual learning plans will be in place for each pupil, and these will allow classroom teachers to transfer learning back into the classroom. Programmes will include: Read, Write, inc., Lifeboat, IDL, Inference training, Nessy, Wordshark and Rainbow. Each pupil will receive a specific programme tailored to their need. We aim to retest regularly to get students to a point where they can access the full curriculum

To develop students who are numerate and prepared for further study or employment and life we invest a considerable proportion of curriculum time into maths. Students study maths for 4 hours in KS3 and for 5 hours in KS4. In Year 7 and 8 students follow the Mathematics Mastery curriculum and in Year 9, 10 and 11 students follow a curriculum which has been designed by a range of Maths specialists working at DVHS, in schools across the Trust and overseen by the Trust Leads for Mathematics.

The curriculum is fully aligned with National Curriculum expectations, with years 7, 8 and 9 aligning with the KS3 curriculum and year 10 and 11 aligning with the KS4 curriculum and the Edexcel specification.

The curriculum design at all years carefully maps out the development of cumulative sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning. We believe that students need to develop both knowledge and skills throughout all learning to truly master that topic. We believe in the theory of using a spiral curriculum based on cognitive theory advanced by Jerome Bruner (1960) which has three key features: students revisit topics themes and subjects several times throughout their school career; the complexity of the topic or theme increases with each revisit (aligned with the expectations of the National Curriculum) and that new learning has a relationship with old learning and is put in context with old information. The benefits ascribed to this approach include that the information is reinforced and solidified each time the student revisits the topic, the spiral allows for logical progression from simplistic ideas to complicated ideas and that throughout their educational experience, students are encouraged to apply early knowledge to later course objectives.

We want to develop students to be able problem solvers, logical thinkers, and lifelong mathematicians, by developing their reasoning, how they make connections and their ability to think mathematically. These three elements form a basis for the development of the Mathematics Mastery curriculum and is also replicated in the planning and curriculum in years 9, 10 and 11.

Throughout their time learning Maths at DVHS, we invest in ensuring that all students can achieve regardless of background. We want to level the playing field and ensure that no student is left behind. We use Data Driven Instruction to ensure that any gaps in knowledge are identified and closed every day.

We invest a considerable proportion of time into Science to develop scientific literacy and an appreciation and understanding of the world our young people live in. In Science students follow a curriculum that we have developed as part of a collaboration project across our MAT. It goes beyond the national curriculum at KS3 to support our young people in their understanding of the world around us, scientific method and possible origins of life and the Universe. It teaches the knowledge, skills and understanding along with developing scientific schema around Wynne Harlen's Big Ideas of science. At Key Stage 4 students can opt to study separate sciences and are given an additional three periods each week to acquire the additional content and spend time exploring more challenging material to prepare themselves. We also offer students the option to study GCSE Astronomy to learn more about our position in the solar system. All our students study the Core Science AQA combined option unless they have chosen the separate sciences.

### **Touchstone 2:**

*A strong emphasis on an academic core including the ebacc subjects that develop cultural capital and prepare students for life in a modern democratic country*

We do not narrow the curriculum. We offer a broad and balanced 3-year key stage 3 that has the ebacc subjects at its heart. We give more curriculum time to the subjects we believe will develop cultural capital; History, Geography and MFL. Our understanding of the term cultural capital is taken from the national curriculum definition provided here; 'It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.' History will play a significant role in providing students with that knowledge through its links to all other subjects; the study of ideas, concepts and thinking, the study of art and music and philosophy throughout history. We do however recognise the huge importance of the creative subjects in developing student's powers of imagination and self-expression and the confidence to believe that they can contribute to human creativity and achievement. We have evaluated our curriculum for all subjects. Our middle level leaders have audited their coverage of the national curriculum. They have identified the knowledge, skills and understanding students will need at the end of each academic year. They have produced overview documents that outline this content and enable an evaluation of the curriculum in each key stage. They have used these overviews to break down that identified content and write mid-term plans that sequence the learning to enable students to build knowledge and skills progressively and logically. They have considered carefully how to dovetail KS3 and 4. Where we have identified that we need to develop our curriculum further we have worked with other organisations to ensure that our curricula are of an extremely high quality. This allows us to focus our internal continuous professional development on the implementation of those curricula, teaching and learning. To this end we have adopted the ARK Mastery curriculum for Key Stage 3 Geography. Where we have purchased appropriate commercial curriculums weekly planning time is built into each week to enable staff and leaders to consider how best to adapt them for the pupils at Darwen Vale.

### **Touchstones 3 and 4**

*A belief that the curriculum should be as broad as possible for as long as possible*

*A commitment to giving students the opportunity to study the arts and technology for as long as possible but with a commitment to allow students to personalise their diet as they move through the school*

We are committed to developing our student's creative and technological abilities. We deliver a range of artistic and practical technology curriculum choices within our "creatives" lessons. These comprise art, food technology, graphics, textiles, design technology, and photography. They are taught on a carousel. We teach music discreetly as we feel it is important for the development of cultural capital. We want students to appreciate the richness of the arts and recognise that this appreciation can help students know who they are, engage with the world around them and navigate choices in the future. Cultural capital can help young people to achieve their goals and it facilitates social mobility. This is particularly important for our young people. In year 9 in preparation for their Key stage 4 study, students both music and drama as discreet one-hour lessons in preparation for selecting GCSE subjects to support their preferred option/career route.

We believe that drama can play a vital role in developing student's confidence. In year 7 and 8 drama is taught through six drop down days. These drop-down days provide sessions of a meaningful length for our specialist drama staff to deliver high quality tuition. A full appreciation of the different mediums of drama is important to equipping our learners with cultural capital that they may not ordinarily be exposed to.

## **Touchstone 5**

*To develop students personal, social and health and health education including high quality careers advice and independent guidance.*

We are committed to developing young people who know how to stay healthy both mentally and physically. We believe that participation in team sports and individual sports is incredibly important in teaching students about cooperation and determination. This is in addition to developing the knowledge and skills to participate in activities that will enrich their lives whilst at Vale and beyond. Education needs to be about enjoyment, and we believe that giving students the time to play sports and games is fundamental to their development and growth.

We are intensely aware of the need for schools to provide students with outstanding personal, social and health education. The Vale Values programme we have developed is delivered in tutor time. Tutor time is 25 minutes each day, so our students receive just under 1 hour each week of time dedicated to the explicit teaching of statutory Sex and Relationships Education, statutory citizenship, and aspects of the PSHE (Personal and Social and Health Education) (personal and social and health education) programme that we think our young people need to know.

## **Touchstone 6**

*To develop student's entrepreneurial skills and qualities*

We are an Aldridge school and the values that we prize at Aldridge are amongst the so called "soft skills" that are prized so highly by employers. We encourage our teachers and our students to exemplify the Aldridge qualities in their lessons:

- Passion
- Determination
- Risk taking
- Teamwork

- Problem solving
- Creativity

We further support the development of these qualities through our pastoral system and through our curriculum and wider school life enrichment programme; the “vale offer”

At Key Stage 4 we provide increased curriculum time for our core subjects and parity across the core. We provide 3 periods weekly for the students to follow their passions. We believe that this approach is representative of our curriculum touchstones.

We offer the students to study additional GCSEs in:

- Triple Science
- History
- Geography
- French
- Music
- Drama
- Art
- Photography
- PE
- Dance
- Business Studies
- Computer Science

We believe strongly that high quality Careers advice and independent guidance is essential to ensure that our students are selecting option subjects that are appropriate for their ability and are preparing them for further education and employment that they have identified as being a preferred route for them.

**“The Vale offer”**

We strongly believe that the wider curriculum must support the taught curriculum. We identify a series of encounters and opportunities that have been carefully mapped out and will support the taught curriculum whilst providing a rich diet of experiences which will develop cultural capital and are indicative of our curriculum touch stones.

| AREA              | Year 7                            | Year 8   | Year 9  | Year 10  | Year 11      |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|--------------|
| <b>CURRICULUM</b> | Geography trip (White Scar Caves) | History trip – Museum<br>French trip – Lille Markets | Work experience<br>Science trip – university<br>French trip – Lille Markets | French trip – Lille Markets<br><br>Enterprise week at university | Careers fair |

|                      |  |  |   |                                      |                              |
|----------------------|--|--|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>SPORT</b>         | Sports Day                                 | PE fixture<br>e.g.<br>Lancashire<br>Lightening | Duke of<br>Edinburgh                              | Duke of<br>Edinburgh                 | Duke of<br>Edinburgh         |
| <b>TEAM BUILDING</b> | Lake district<br>residential               |  |   | Lakeside –<br>leadership<br>training |                              |
| <b>CULTURAL</b>      | Theatre<br>Trip -<br>Manchester/<br>London | London   | Art<br>gallery/museum –<br>Paris (Disney<br>land) | Manchester –<br>libraries/galleries  | Shakespeare<br>theatre visit |

### Curriculum development in Faculties

Our curriculum aims are aligned with those of the Multi Academy Trust and the position papers and philosophy behind an Aldridge curriculum – see Curriculum choice and architecture an Aldridge education position statement.

We have clearly set out our aims for the curriculum in this paper and we share these explicitly with our staff. This is very much big picture thinking and this work has been developed in significantly greater detail at Faculty level.

Those big ideas described in our touchstones are broken down in each curriculum area in the following processes and policies:

- Curriculum rationale – This is a much more detailed version of the school’s curriculum rationale and policy. It outlines the collaborative thinking of leaders and teachers in each faculty area and describes the main concepts of each subject, the seminal content, and ruminations on the sequencing of delivery best suited to maximise student learning, understanding and mastery.
- KS2 – 4 Overview of knowledge, understanding and skills. This document in grid format lays out in overview the content to be delivered over 3 or 5 years of study. This document should complement the curriculum rationale.
- MTP overview sheets – These documents provide an overview of knowledge, understanding and skills in each unit.
- MTPs for each unit of work. - These documents in grid format lay out in a lesson-by-lesson format the content to be delivered over that unit of study. This document should complement the curriculum rationale and MTP overview.

These mid-term planning documents form the starting point for teachers in their planning of individual lessons.

That lesson planning is described in more detail in our Teaching and learning handbook and time is afforded for this process to be undertaken in a collaborative way in our weekly co planning sessions.

As a trust and as a school our standard is excellence, and we are seeking to enhance our curriculum unit plans in line with our focus on three school improvement levers. These levers are:

- Student culture
- Lesson observation and feedback
- Data Driven instruction

It is the last of these that we are principally concerned with here. At Darwen vale and within Aldridge DDI is teaching and learning. No instruction or teaching should not be informed by data. This data does not always need to be numerical data but what we describe as micro data; the numbers of students who have not grasped a key learning point evidenced in an exit ticket activity, or the students who performed weakly on a low stakes quiz, indicating an insufficient grasp of knowledge on a particular unit or lesson.

In line with trust best practice, we are reviewing our curriculum plans against a clear rubric – See Evaluation rubric - in a several key areas:

- Sequencing
- Reteach opportunities
- Key learning activities
- Know – show
- Questioning
- Modelling and guided discussion
- Assessment/DDI opportunities
- Literacy, numeracy, and vocabulary entitlement
- Enrichment

The result of these audits will form a major part of each departments development plan for the academic year. Working collaboratively to develop our curriculum to that standard of excellence.