



Curriculum Policy

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Curriculum Intent

Manchester Enterprise Academy (MEA) puts curriculum design at the heart of its improvement model. It has evolved over recent years, as we have understood more fully the deficits in cultural capital that the vast majority of our students experience, and in response to an ever-changing educational landscape, to put knowledge at the heart of what we do.

The MEA curriculum consists of two strands:

- **The Fantastic Futures or pastoral curriculum.** This is the ethos, expectations and standards we hold dear as a trust as we constantly strive to broaden students' horizons through a range of experiences, challenges and opportunities that they would be unlikely to encounter if we did not provide them.
- **The academic, exam-tested curriculum.** This is the curriculum offer we provide for students to enable them to leave with the best exam results they possibly can.

Together, these two strands are central to our vision of providing a Fantastic Future for All.

The MEA curriculum model is based upon the principles best expounded by Daniel T Willingham, namely:

- **Factual knowledge precedes skill.** Students need knowledge to provide context to their learning. Without knowledge, students will not be able to think critically.
- **Memory is the residue of thought.** By thinking about things, students are more likely to remember.
- **Deep knowledge is our goal.** However, in order to achieve this, students will need shallow knowledge first.
- **Proficiency requires practice.** To achieve deep knowledge, students must practice. Alongside this, we must also test how proficient students are becoming.
- **Intelligence can be changed through sustained hard work.** Successes and failures need to be discussed in terms of effort, not ability, meaning that all can achieve.

These principles are embedded in our two-stage curriculum model – a Foundation Knowledge curriculum in Y7, and 9, known as 'Know It', and a KS4 Examination curriculum in Y10 and 11.

We run a three-year KS3 before students commence on examinable courses in Year 10. Because so many of our students lack cultural capacity, we consider it essential to expose students to as many subjects as possible on entry, ensuring that they all have a broad and balanced curriculum. The vast majority of students study up to 16 subjects in Year 7 and 8, some of these subjects being on a carousel basis. In Year 9, students focus on a smaller number of subjects, but we ensure they all maintain a breadth of subjects as students study 10 or 11 subjects, not all being examined at the end of KS4. This approach gives students the opportunity to specialise in core areas, whilst also ensuring they follow a curriculum of maximum currency that is most likely to allow them to show positive attitudes to learning. The options process commences in the Spring term of Year 9.

The options process is supported by lessons in the Fantastic Futures curriculum, assemblies, options evenings and communications, and a one-to-one interview with a senior leader to help students make informed and appropriate choices. Parents and carers are also invited to attend this interview. We also take a flexible approach, with a system in place enabling students to change an option should they wish to.

In addition to the taught curriculum, students complete weekly Independent Study. This is strongly focused on retrieval practice, as evidence shows that this approach facilitates improved retention of knowledge. At Key stage 3 this is based on knowledge organisers for each subject, with retrieval practice

activities set to enhance their recall. This knowledge is then tested in lessons using a short low-stakes test. The process and nature of independent study is the same at Key Stage 4, however curriculum areas replace knowledge organisers with more detailed knowledge resources for students to keep at home, for example, revision booklets.

Underpinning the academic curriculum is the Fantastic Futures curriculum, which includes pastoral, social, emotional, cultural and personal education. Our schools are in urban areas characterised by high levels of deprivation and the majority of our students do not experience the gamut of more rounded, cultural and developmental opportunities available to their more affluent peers elsewhere. Being based in areas with endemic issues associated with poverty, we believe that we have to do all we can to bridge this gap as most of our families are unable to do so themselves. This manifests itself through our Pledge Programme, where we expose students to an array of cultural, religious, geographical, aspirational and activity based opportunities that they would not otherwise encounter. The purpose of all this is to provide a fantastic future for all – we know that good exam results alone are not enough to secure a positive future. We also have to equip students with the necessary communication, social, networking and emotional intelligence skills to thrive in the future.

Curriculum Implementation

At MEA all subjects produce a Journey on a Page outlining the path a student takes through the curriculum within the subject from year 7 to year 11. The curriculum is set out in more detail in subject Big Pictures for each year group. The Big Picture outlines the main knowledge areas students will study throughout the academic year. Unit Plans are then written for each unit, which specify the weekly breakdown of lessons before teachers plan the individual lessons. The basic structure for Unit Plans is to include a mixture of Know It lessons (where students acquire knowledge) and Show It lessons (where students apply knowledge). Subjects also produce Knowledge Organisers for each Unit at Key Stage 3; these are the basis for students' Independent Learning tasks. Student progress is assessed through regular Mini Test assessments (fortnightly in core subjects) before a Big Test takes place once per term. At the end of the academic year, all students sit Progress Exams in subjects. Curriculum Journey on a Page and Big Pictures are published on our website and updated annually.

The academic curriculum is complimented by our Fantastic Futures as part of the academic and pastoral timetable. This is also a 'wrap around' curriculum offering broader experiences and student leadership opportunities.

At MEA we adopt a pathway approach in order to ensure we are doing the right thing for every child. We encourage the EBacc pathway where appropriate and our academic, knowledge based curriculum helps prepare students for this route, leading to high levels of uptake. This is a discrete subject-organised, traditional pathway in which English, Maths and Science receive most curriculum time. EBacc subjects of History, Geography and a foreign language will be taken in addition to Foundation subjects covering the arts, sport, technology, business and other areas.

Some students follow a more technical pathway, which is similar to the EBacc pathway, but with a greater technical offer. This would most likely come from EBacc curriculum time.

However, with no 'options blocks' in the process, students have the freedom to create the right set of qualifications for them. Further information can be found in the Options Booklet, which is revised annually.

A minority of students follow an alternative pathway, within our Alternative provision.

For students on our Alternative Provision pathway, the intent of the curriculum is to support students who are identified at transition as ones who may struggle to access mainstream lessons to achieve a Fantastic Future and require a high degree of personalised learning. The Include pathway provides a structure in which students maintain high standards of behaviour at MEA by ensuring excellent learning experiences resulting in effective progress, with bespoke interventions and therapies provided to support students' specific needs. Each student has an individual learning plan (ILP) which is reviewed regularly. Students are taught in small groups, supported by a dedicated Teaching Assistant. Please see our Alternative Pathways Policy for more details on this provision.

We run a two-week timetable to provide a more nuanced approach to the allocation of curriculum time for subjects. In designing the timetable, we try to ensure that the two weeks are as similar as possible.

At MEA, students in year 7, 8 and 9 are split into two bands, x and y for EBacc subjects. In year 7 these are determined by their KS2 SATs scores and the other intelligence from primary schools on the needs and complexities of individual students, these are reviewed during year 7 to ensure they are effective, and opportunities to move band are always given. In year 8 and 9, those bands are reviewed in conjunction with EBacc curriculum leaders. Within the bands, Maths and Science are free to assign classes; English classes also define the Humanities and MFL classes. Foundation subjects are taught in mixed ability classes, with some taught as part of our carousel. In Years 10 and 11, all students study largely for GCSEs although some vocational courses (for example BTEC, NCFE etc.) are also taken. Maths, English and Science teach whole year groups at once, allowing for complete freedom to assign classes. Other EBacc subjects teach their cohorts together allowing for assigning classes the most effective way in each case.

Curriculum Impact cycle

We hold attainment collection points for cohorts at three times across the year, and collect Attitude to Learning data on a half termly basis.

A key feature of the curriculum and assessment processes at MEA is the way data from Big Tests is used. For all year groups, Question Level Analysis data is collected in our bespoke software 'EDDI Assessor'. This software automatically generates analysis at class level, broken down by cohort as well as student. This information enables a teacher to rapidly complete a class analysis and ensure that they address identified weaknesses in lessons quickly and effectively. Curriculum leaders can also use this data, as well as class and whole year group level data, to review the performance of the whole year group and plan any actions or interventions needed. This could include reviewing the curriculum model or scheme of work; reviewing lesson planning or mini tests; small group interventions; support for specific staff or students.

This process of how valid data is generated and used to impact on pupil progress across the assessment cycle is summarised in the Curriculum Impact Cycle below. Further details on our target setting can be found in Appendix 1. More information on our assessment and reporting process can be found in our Assessment and Reporting policy.

Curriculum Impact Cycle



Appendix 1: Target setting

A Robust System for Setting Targets and Monitoring Performance

A Fantastic Future for All

Our vision is for all students make the most progress possible regardless of their starting point. Integral to this is the need for a target system that is easy to understand, clearly demonstrates progress and is suitably robust and relevant. We believe that intelligent target setting has a key role to play in raising aspirations, emphasising expectations and monitoring on-going performance of students and subjects.

What makes an effective target?

For a target to be meaningful and effective it needs to be:

- Owned by students and teachers
- Ambitious at improving rates of progress
- Based on prior attainment where possible
- Lead to improvements in learning and teaching
- Something that is regularly tracked and reviewed

The most important of these criteria is the ownership aspect. A target without buy-in is meaningless. One that students and staff subscribe to can have enormous power.

The Target Setting Process

Target setting at uses FFT20 targets for all students, with teachers and curriculum leaders always having the flexibility to move those targets up as student performance dictates. Our analysis after a Big Test or progress exam follows a similar pattern to that described above. There are a couple of variations. Once we reach the middle of year 9, we will begin to collect a predicted grade as well as a current grade (based on actual test performance). Before that, performance is reflected back to students based on a comparison with an expected target score (in year 7 & 8, see table below) or based on the average result in each subject, divided into thirds (just in year 9 Big Test 1). Once data is collected, a review process takes place as explained in the Curriculum Impact cycle, with the following key steps:

- Use of EDDI Assessor at class and department level to identify exactly where the strengths and weaknesses are to address through teaching
- Analysis of predicted and current data is done both in EDDI for QLA cohort analysis and in SISRA (at KS4) for more detailed exam performance analysis.
- Reports are produced for teachers, middle leaders, SLT and governors to ensure that everyone updates development plans and has clear and measurable actions between this point and the next assessment window.
- Student reviews are produced, students reflect on their own performance in tutor time, and the reviews are sent home to parents.

Target scores and colour coding for year 7 & 8:

Red – well below target	Amber – just below target	Year 11 FFT20 Target Grade	Suggested Target Score	Green – on target	Dark Green – well above target
N/A	0 – 4	U	5	5 – 15	16+
N/A	0 – 15	1	16	16 – 25	26 +
15 and below	16 – 25	2	26	26 – 39	40 +
25 and below	26 – 39	3	40	40 – 49	50 +
39 and below	40 – 49	4	50	50 – 59	60 +
49 and below	50 – 59	5	60	60 – 69	70 +
54 and below	55 – 64	6	70	65 – 79	80 +
64 and below	65 – 74	7	80	75 – 84	85 +
74 and below	75 – 79	8	90	80 – 91	92 +
74 and below	75 – 84	9	95	85 – 95	96 +