



Curriculum Policy



**THE LADDER
SCHOOL**

Redefining alternative provision



Date for Review	In line with The Mercian Trust's policy schedule	
Date posted on website	March 2025	
Member of staff responsible for the policy	Richard Gifford	
Date adopted by the Local Governing Body	March 2025	
Signed by Principal		[Ruth Williams]
Signed by Chair of Governing Body		[Nicola Walters]

Version Control



Version	Author	Date	Changes Made
1.0	RG	January 2025	First Edition

1. The Mercian Trust's Curriculum Intent Statement 2024-25

We are a family of schools committed to helping each other **increase opportunities** and **improve outcomes** for students throughout the West Midlands conurbation.

Our schools are committed to providing an **expertly delivered, ambitious curriculum** so that our students enjoy developing their knowledge, understanding and skill. We prioritise our efforts to address the **social mobility** generational failings for disadvantaged and vulnerable children, many of whom have special educational needs and/ or disabilities.

As a result of our commitment to **improvement and innovation** students in Mercian schools will be the highest academic achievers who will secure places at the very top universities, conservatoires and specialist colleges and those with the greatest practical aptitudes will secure technical vocational awards that are valued by employers and prepare them to progress onto apprenticeship pathways with flagship employers.

As a result of our commitment to each other, both staff and students will be **physically and mentally healthy** with the resilience, adaptability and values required to make good life choices and build successful personal and professional relationships. They will be the first to welcome people new to our local community and embrace opportunities to learn from different cultural experiences and from people with different religious faiths and beliefs.

Put simply, the staff and students in Mercian schools will **live life to the full** in the pursuit of what is **good, right and true**. In doing so they will **realise their potential** and make a **positive contribution** to their **families** and the **local, national and international community**.

Reviewed and Updated January 2025

2. Curriculum

- 2.1 The Ladder School is an alternative provision for young people who have struggled in mainstream education for a variety of reasons. Some have undiagnosed or recently diagnosed special educational needs including



SEMH; are often from under-resourced backgrounds and/or chaotic homes; some have been permanently excluded.

2.2 The curriculum at The Ladder School has been designed to meet their needs and according to the pathway they are in:

- 2.2.1 Full-time provision for students in Years 9 to 11;
- 2.2.2 Part-time at TLS and part-time at off-site vocational alternative provision placements;
- 2.2.3 Full-time Sixth Form provision for students in Years 12, 13 and 14 with EHCPs.

2.3 We subscribe to Viviane Robinson's purposes of education¹ and have sculpted our curriculum to meet these purposes:

- 2.3.1 **Preparation:** "focused on the acquisition of knowledge and skills that enable children and young persons to lead satisfying and productive lives, including enabling them to make choices about the type of paid employment they desire."
- 2.3.2 **Socialisation:** "concerned with the initiation of students into particular cultures and communities, which may be associated with subject disciplines, professional groups, or political, social, religious, and ethnic traditions."
- 2.3.3 **Autonomy:** "the ability to manage one's life."

2.4 Year 9 full-time curriculum comprises:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- PE
- Catering
- Humanities
- IT
- MFL (Spanish)
- PSHCE

2.5 Year 10 and 11 full-time curriculum comprises:

- GCSE English
- GCSE Maths
- GCSE Science
- GCSE Literature (for some)
- Two BTEC vocational subjects
- PE
- PSHCE

¹ Virtuous Educational Leadership: Doing the Right Work the Right Way by Viviane Robinson. Copyright © 2023 by Corwin Press

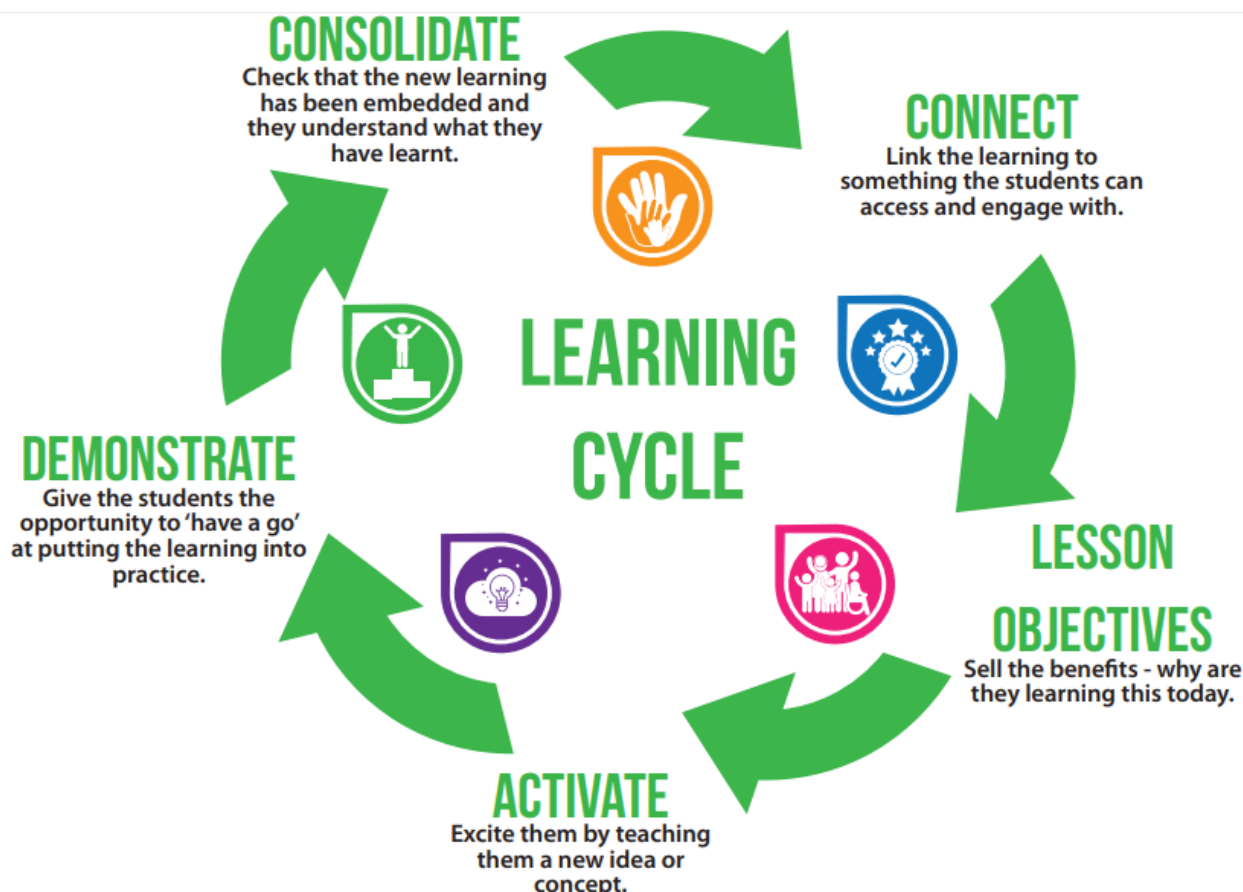


- 2.6 Sixth Form full-time curriculum comprises:
- Re-take GCSE English Language if a Grade 4 not secured
 - Re-take GCSE Maths if a Grade 4 not secured
 - Vocational Qualification (Art or Hospitality)
 - Futures & Skills (inc. PSHCE)
- 2.7 TLS-Connect students' curriculum comprises:
- GCSE English
 - GCSE Maths
 - Appropriate qualifications through off-site AP
 - Taster lessons in Catering, Animal Care, IT, Art, Humanities
 - PE
 - PSHCE
- 2.8 In addition to timetabled lessons, all students receive bespoke and appropriate interventions from a range of internal staff and external professionals. These interventions are based on observed need, diagnosed needs including on EHCPs and derived from testing upon entry.

3. Teaching and Learning

- 3.1 All teachers follow The Ladder School Learning Cycle, although they are encouraged to adapt if the topic or students require it.





- 3.2 Teachers are encouraged to model thinking aloud about learning and the processes we go through when learning new information, revising it and recalling it during lessons. Likewise, students' metacognition skills are developed through thinking aloud and being able to make mistakes safely.
- 3.3 Teachers have centralised medium term plans (MTPs) but all lessons must be adapted to meet the needs of the students in their classes. All planning is monitored, reviewed and updated annually to ensure it is relevant.
- 3.4 The curriculum has been designed, where specifications allow, to provide an awareness of the many rich cultures we are all a part of (i.e. socialisation). We live in a diverse community from many places with an important history and our curriculum should reflect this. Opportunities to build cultural capital are included when possible.
- 3.5 In addition the core British Values are embedded into the subject curriculum and PSHCE.

4. Assessment

- 4.1 Upon entry, all students are tested to provide an up to date baseline:
- GL CAT4 Assessments



- GL Reading
- GL Spelling
- Lucid Exact
- Bounce

4.2 In addition, we take on all information from their previous schools, including EHCPs.

4.3 During lessons, teachers and Learning Coaches will provide live and ongoing feedback to students on what and how to improve, whilst also ensuring that students respond to this feedback. This live and ongoing feedback may be verbal or written, but there must be evidence in student work that they have responded to this feedback.

4.4 **Generating targets**

4.4.1 Broadly, end of Key Stage 4 targets will be based on GL CAT4 scores alongside Reading Age and Lucid Exact Assessment. We will also take into account student attendance, SEND and any external contextual information on a case by case basis.

4.4.2 A *minimum* expected GCSE grade will be generated by a senior leader; we will also generate an *aspirational target*. The aspirational target will *never* be lower than a Grade 4. Targets set will be whole grades, not sub-grades (e.g. no longer a 4.5 or 4.8).

4.4.3 These targets will be reviewed twice per year to ensure they are challenging but realistic. They will be reviewed after Data Drop 2 and Data Drop 3.

4.5 **Sharing targets**

4.5.1 Targets will be shared with staff as part of students' New Starter Packs.

4.5.2 Targets will be shared with students in a 1-2-1 Induction Conversation with their Learning Coach, explaining how we will support them to achieve these grades or even better. We will also explain in this meeting that targets will be reviewed regularly.

4.5.3 No target grades will be on student books.

4.5.4 Targets will *not* be shared with parents/carers until the final data drop of Year 10 and then throughout Year 11 via students' reports. Should parents/carers ask for them we can share our draft targets but explain that these are being reviewed regularly.

4.6 **Reporting against targets**



- 4.6.1 There will now be only three data drops: end of Autumn, Spring and Summer Terms.
- 4.6.2 We will not add finalised minimum expected and aspirational GCSE targets to Student Reports until the final data drop of Year 10 and then throughout Year 11. The purpose of this is to sharpen and direct learning/revision and also as a guide for Post-16 choices.
- 4.6.3 Prior to this, teachers will use their professional judgement appraising where students' starting points are, their draft minimum target, and determining whether they are on track to achieve this grade based on their current learning.
- 4.6.4 They will report this against: ***Is my child on track to achieve their potential?***
- On track to **exceed** expectations
 - On track to **meet** expectations
 - On track to **not meet** expectations
 - On track to **fall well below** expectations
- 4.6.5 Teachers will select ONE improvement point for each child to work on in their subject; this will be related to the curriculum/specification. *We are exploring if these can be pre-agreed and then staff select from a drop-down menu.*
- 4.6.6 In addition, students will have an ***Attitude to Learning*** teacher judgement against the following:
- Attitude to **presence**: arrives to lessons on time and/or remains in lessons
 - Attitude to **work**: completes work to the best of their ability
 - Attitude to **others**: is polite, well mannered, not disturbing learning
- 4.6.7 Against these, teachers will judge as:
- Always
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
- 4.6.8 Learning Coaches will quality assure A2L teacher judgements to ensure that they are accurate and consistent.
- 4.6.9 The assessment process is:

Week before Assessment Week	All summative assessments (tests or mocks) are QA by a senior leader
Week 0	Assessment week
Weeks +1 and +2	Catch up tests/mocks and teacher assessment Paired-teacher moderation



Week +3	Staff meeting to standardise test/mock results using external specialist support where possible
Week +3	Data drops closes and gaps are chased up
Week +4	DIRT lessons / wrappers / next steps SLT analysis of data and identification of achievement gaps
Week +5	Staff meeting to plan interventions to close gaps and what success will look like for each student

5. Extended Learning and Homework

- 5.1 Both Seneca and Maths Watch are provided free to all students in order to extend their learning and revise at home.
- 5.2 For young people without access to computers or data, the school can provide a device upon request.
- 5.3 Additionally, paper copies of extended learning can be provided upon request.
- 5.4 For some students, we may place them onto Academy 21 to engage in high quality online distance learning.

6. Literacy, Numeracy and Oracy

- 6.1 Addressing gaps in students' skills, abilities and confidences in reading, writing, numeracy, speaking and listening is an urgent priority.
- 6.2 These gaps are partially assessed through testing upon entry, prior school reports and what is observed by internal staff.
- 6.3 Closing these gaps and strengthening all essential skills is addressed in both lessons and interventions. Additionally, we build students' confidence in oracy through informal conversation (e.g. during family lunch).
- 6.4 Through CEAIG we make it very clear to all students how important these essential skills are for further and higher education, apprenticeships and employment.

