Teaching & Learning Policy

Successful – Confident – Responsible

ACER ACADEMY MISSION STATEMENT
To be inclusive
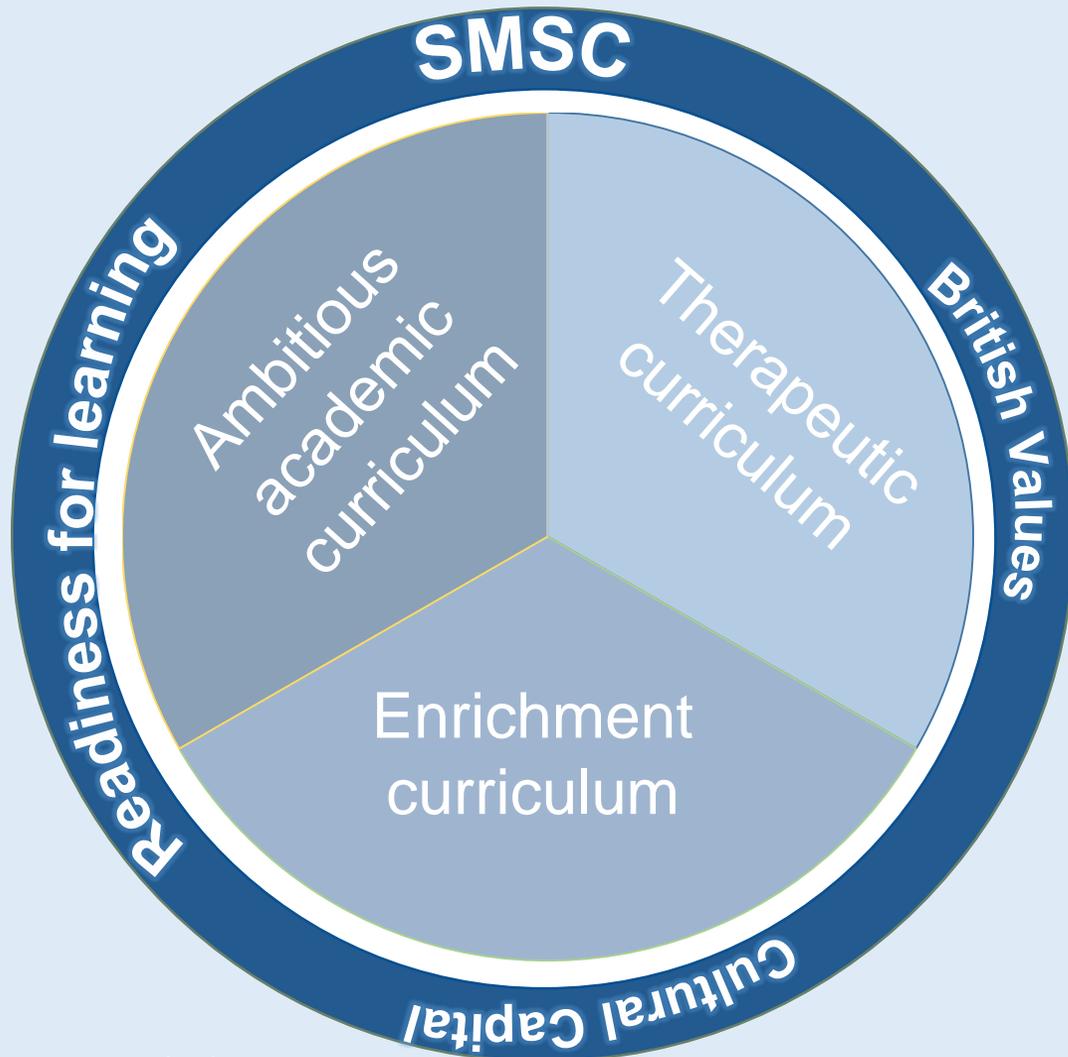To provide nurturing/caring environments.
For children to feel safe.
To work with integrity and a strong moral compass.
To have the highest expectations and standards.

Policy developed by:	
Policy to be reviewed:	
Summary of changes	New policy

Main aims of the Acer curriculum

SMSC

British Values

Readiness for learning

Cultural Capital

Ambitious academic curriculum

Therapeutic curriculum

Enrichment curriculum

9/24/2025

Provide an **ambitious academic curriculum** so that students can access a wide range of qualifications and vocational options that can support and impact on their further education and their employability.

The enrichment curriculum at Acer Academy provides pupils with diverse opportunities to prepare for success in 21st-century Britain. We aim to bridge gaps with socially advantaged peers by offering experiences beyond the classroom, including inspiring visitors, assemblies, clubs, and extracurricular activities linked to subjects. These opportunities broaden horizons, develop essential skills, and foster confidence, ensuring pupils are well-equipped for life's challenges and opportunities.

We offer a therapeutic curriculum to support our students' holistic development, fostering emotional well-being alongside academic progress. By integrating therapeutic approaches into our curriculum, we create a nurturing environment where students can thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

To ensure that our students are in the best position to be ready to access and participate in their academic lessons. To develop our students' **cultural capital**, for us this is providing students with the opportunities to experience people, places and things that contribute towards the essential knowledge that pupils need in order to be educated citizens. To promote pupils' physical health and personal development which includes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental development of pupils at the school in order to prepare our students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life

# Acer teaching and Learning policy rational

The rationale of this Teaching Learning Policy is to:

- Explain the effective Teaching and Learning strategies involved in how we deliver education.

- Ensure consistency in teaching practices across the academy.

- Maintain a consistent approach to classroom management, lesson planning, and student engagement.

- Promote evidence-based teaching methods

- Encourage continuous professional development for teachers to stay informed about the latest research and methodologies.

- Outline exemplary teaching practices that can serve as a benchmark for all educators within the

ACER ACADEMY

"At the heart of our educational mission is the belief that every pupil deserves a high-quality learning experience tailored to their unique needs. By employing the best pedagogical approaches, we aim to make learning not only impactful but enduring. It is through this dedication to excellence that we empower our students to thrive and succeed, both now and in the future."
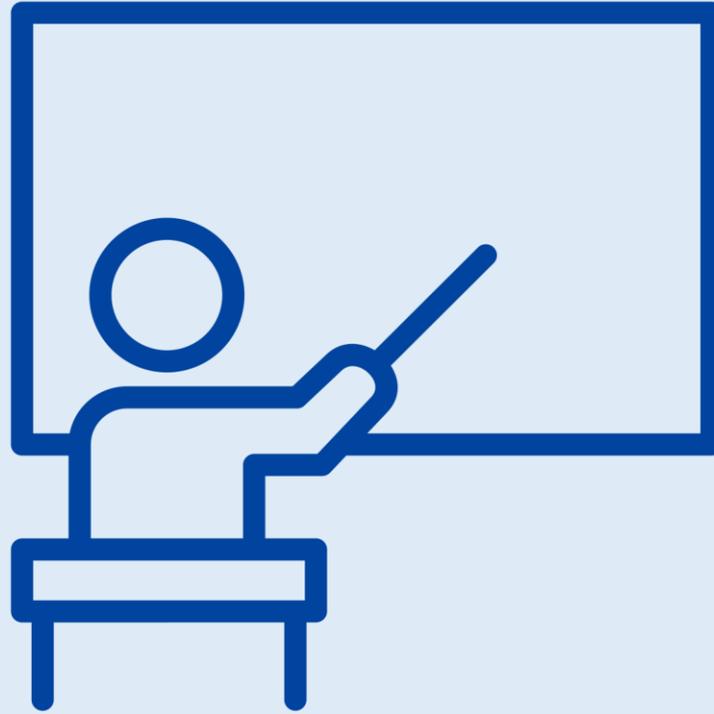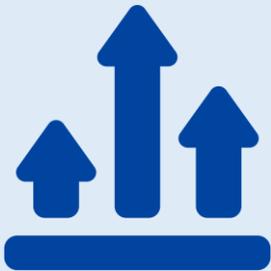
Teaching Approach
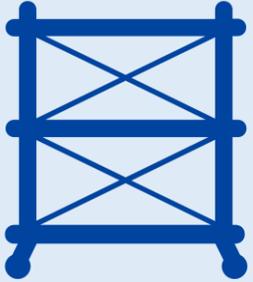
	Classroom environment	We expect all classrooms to be welcoming, safe and nurturing. Classrooms should be tidy, well organised and free of unnecessary distractions. Classrooms will have calm and quiet areas and optional booths to support pupils focus should they choose to work in this way.
	Know your pupils and develop relationships	Teachers are expected to develop good relationships with their pupils. The importance of knowing pupil's needs, strengths and weaknesses cannot be underestimated. If the student has an EHCP or a Boxall profile, teachers are expected to have read it and plan lessons accordingly.
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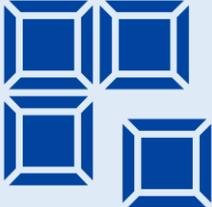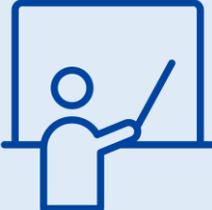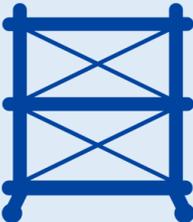|		
	Scheduling	Scheduling provides a structured approach to the school day, offering clear expectations and consistency to support pupils with autism. By outlining what to expect, when, and for how long, we help reduce anxiety, foster a sense of security, and create an environment where pupils can focus on learning without uncertainty.
	Consistent routines	Consistent routines within lessons, starting from the entry point, provide pupils with a clear structure and predictability. This helps them feel safe and secure, reducing anxiety about the unknown and enabling them to focus fully on their tasks without distraction or uncertainty.
	Carefully Planned Transitions	Carefully planned transitions ensure that pupils move calmly and purposefully between activities or spaces, reducing uncertainty and minimising disruption. When pupils know what to expect and how to manage each step of the change, they feel more secure and able to maintain focus. This predictability lowers anxiety, supports positive behaviour, and maximises learning time by preventing confusion or loss of momentum.

Lesson structure

Questioning / Vocabulary / Oracy / Feedback / Transitions →
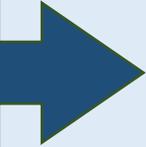
- Sign Posting
- Memory Review / Do It Now
- Low barrier starting point
- Clarity of aims and instructions
- Chunking
- Modelling – I do / We do / You do
- Adaptive Teaching

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Do It Now		'Do it now' tasks focus student attention on content or ask students to recall background knowledge relevant to the lesson. Having this ready on entry helps students to settle and engage early in the lesson limiting wasted lesson time.
Memory Review		The purpose of memory review tasks is to reconnect students to prior learning, strengthening memory links to prevent forgetting. By revisiting key concepts during the lesson, we ensure that knowledge is reinforced and retained for the long term.
Low Barrier Starting point		Low-barrier starting points are designed to ensure all students experience early success in a task, helping to build confidence and reduce anxiety. By setting achievable initial challenges, we create a supportive environment where pupils feel motivated to engage and progress without fear of failure, fostering a positive approach to learning.
Signposting		Signposting cues students in to what they can expect from each stage of their lesson. If provides them with structure and clarity. Signalling changes between activities help students to track where they are up to and what to expect next.

Clarity of Aims and Instructions		Setting clear and specific lesson outcomes that all students understand and can work towards achieving. Focus on providing clear and concise instructions without creating cognitive over load.
Chunking		Breaking down information and tasks into smaller manageable chunks or sections, through for example success criteria or sub sections reduces the pressure on pupils working memory.
Modelling		This involves providing worked examples with the teacher modelling self-regulation and thought processes. Remember to model the key steps and give pupils opportunities to join in gradually so you can guide their thinking before they have a go independently.
Adaptive Teaching		Adaptive teaching involves using a range of strategies to provide temporary support for pupils, encouraging them to thinking of their own problem solving and moving towards them being more independent.

Questioning / Vocabulary / Oracy / Feedback

Effective questioning stimulates critical thinking and deeper understanding, encouraging students to explore and articulate their ideas. Thought-provoking questions guide learning, assess comprehension, and promote active engagement in the classroom.

Oracy skills are essential for effective communication and learning. By promoting structured speaking and listening activities, we help students develop confidence, articulate their thoughts clearly, and engage in meaningful dialogue

Expanding vocabulary enhances their reading comprehension, writing skills, and overall academic achievement. We emphasize the explicit teaching of key terms and concepts, ensuring students can confidently use and understand subject-specific language.

Constructive feedback is crucial for student growth and development. By providing timely, specific, and actionable feedback, we help students understand their progress, identify areas for improvement, and take ownership of their learning journey.

Encouraging Pupil Responses

Consistent with our pupils' SEMH needs and anxiety, our observations during lesson visits have highlighted a recurring challenge: encouraging pupils to actively respond and share their answers during lessons. We recognise the importance of ensuring all pupils feel empowered to engage actively. Therefore, it is crucial to provide strategies that actively foster engagement. Creating an environment where every student feels comfortable and confident to participate is essential to their academic and emotional development. By implementing effective strategies tailored to their needs, we aim to cultivate a classroom atmosphere that promotes inclusivity and enhances learning outcomes.

Classroom culture	Foster a supportive and non-judgmental classroom atmosphere where students feel safe expressing themselves. Emphasize respect and empathy among peers.
Non-Verbal Participation Options	Provide alternative ways for students to participate, such as writing down their answers on a whiteboard or in a notebook, using hand signals, voting tools or participating in small group discussions.
Opt out / Come back later	Allow pupils to communicate that at a given moment that are not comfortable to respond, follow this by saying that you will come back with a question later.
Think – pair share	Implementing the Think-Pair-Share strategy allows students to first think about their response individually, then discuss it with a partner in a low-pressure setting. This approach builds confidence by providing reassurance and feedback in a supportive environment before sharing with the whole class.

Normalize Quiet Responses	Encourage and accept responses that are whispered or spoken softly. Reinforce the idea that it's okay to speak quietly if that helps them feel more comfortable.
Provide Wait Time	Allow extra time for students to gather their thoughts before responding. Avoid rushing or pressuring them to answer immediately. Use 'I am going to ask a question now to x student and come back in 2 minutes for a response'.
Use Prompts and Scaffolding	Provide specific prompts or questions that guide their thinking and help them structure their responses. Break down tasks into smaller, manageable steps.
Celebrate Effort and Progress	Acknowledge and celebrate every attempt to participate, regardless of the outcome. Positive reinforcement can help build confidence over time.

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Accessibility and inclusivity

Adaptive Teaching

At Acer Academy, we believe adaptive teaching is the cornerstone of a dynamic and responsive educational experience. It is an approach that recognises each student's unique needs, strengths, and learning styles, fostering an environment where every individual can thrive. Adaptive teaching involves continuous assessment, reflection, and adjustment of instructional strategies, materials, and activities to ensure that they align with the evolving needs of our students. Proactive approaches are planned in advance of learning, whereas reactive adaptations are when the teacher, armed with their formative assessment techniques, judges who need increased support.

Proactive
Having an understanding of pupils individual needs
Firm knowledge of IEPs and pupil passports
Using summative assessment to define starting point.
Making reasonable adjustments ahead of learning.
Use TA support
Identification of common misconceptions to look out for during teaching
Improve accessibility e.g. Font size, proximity to the teacher, visibility of the screen.
Use videos / pictures to dual code and contextualize.
Plan to explicitly teach vocabulary.
Plan to model.
Plan to scaffold.
Plan with cognitive load in mind
Provide alternative ways of answering in class.
Provide exemplars.

Reactive
Being confident to deviate from the original plan.
Using formative assessment to increase or decrease support.
Use live feedback
Adjust language
Clarify tasks
Re-explain or explain in a different way.
Use flexible groupings to respond.
Use an analogy.
Provide a prompt.
Use more live modelling for smaller groups / individuals.
Provide a check-list as a prompt.
Use questioning.

The five S of Adapted Teaching

Scaffolds	Scale	Style	Synthesize	Solidify
Help scaffold students' thinking and organisation of their ideas. Use aids to support, with the aim of gradual removal. Examples could include graphic organisers, pictures, keywords, sentence starters, writing frames, checklists and structure strips.	Scale is about making adaptations to the scale of a given task to adjust the degree of challenge. For example, shortening or lengthening a descriptive writing task, increasing or decreasing the scale of distance in PE, reducing quantity, assigning fewer problems, and focusing on quality and depth of understanding rather than quantity.	Style is about making adaptations to the task structure for some students. Is there an alternative way they can demonstrate their understanding? For example, could a writing frame help provide structure for an extended piece of writing in RE.	Connect new learning to pupils' prior learning and knowledge. If there are gaps in prior knowledge, new learning will not be secure; pre-teaching or extra recap over prior content can be used.	Provide opportunities for extra practice for those who need it. This can reinforce learning and mastery.

Safe

All other scaffolds—scaffolding, scale, style, synthesize, and solidify—depend on a culture of safety. This means fostering a classroom where students know their responses are valid and they can make mistakes without fear, ensuring a secure, supportive space for learning.

Enhancements

Learning beyond the classroom

At Acer Academy, we believe that learning extends far beyond the confines of the classroom. That's why we're dedicated to providing our students with enriching out-of-class experiences that inspire, engage, and broaden their horizons.

At the heart of our educational philosophy is the understanding that real-world experiences are essential for holistic development. These experiences enhance academic learning and foster life skills, creativity, and a deep appreciation for the world around us.

We take our commitment to out-of-class experiences seriously. To ensure a well-rounded education, each subject at Oakwood Academy has an Enhancement Section in its policy. This dedicated approach allows us to carefully plan and execute a comprehensive enhancement cycle throughout a pupil's time with us.
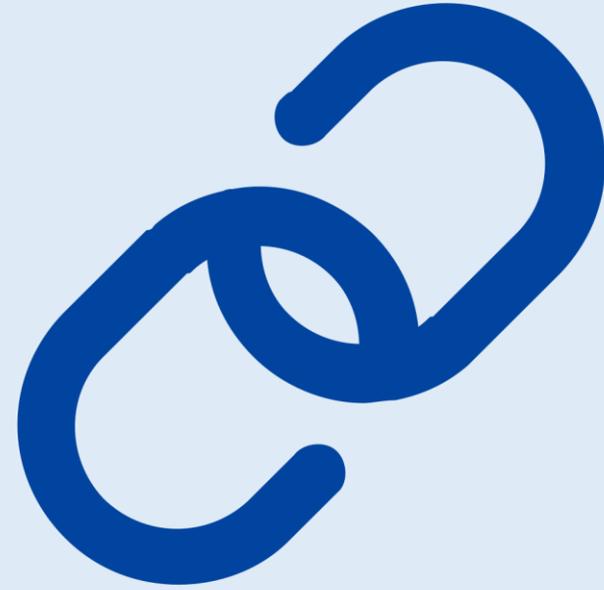
Cross-curricular links

Cross Curricular Links

At Acer, cross-curricular links are identified and integrated at the planning stages of the curriculum to enhance learning and provide a cohesive educational experience. These links are evidenced through individual subject policies, ensuring that they are systematically incorporated and aligned with overall educational objectives.

To support this integration, we allocate dedicated time for subject leaders to collaborate and ensure that cross-curricular opportunities are maximized. This collaboration is crucial in ensuring that learning experiences are appropriate and sequential. For instance, we ensure that mathematical concepts encountered in science lessons have already been introduced through dedicated math teaching.

This approach prevents confusion and reinforces the application of knowledge across different subjects. By fostering these cross-curricular connections, we aim to create a more interconnected and meaningful learning journey for our students, encouraging them to see the relevance and application of their knowledge in various contexts.
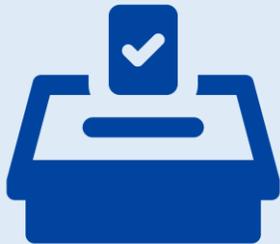
SMSC & British Values

SMSC and British Values

At Acer we are committed to exploiting SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural) and British Values (BV) links throughout our curriculum. These connections are identified and integrated at the planning stages, ensuring that they are embedded within our educational framework and evidenced through individual subject policies.

Subject leaders meticulously map out these SMSC and BV links in their policies, ensuring a coherent and comprehensive approach. This integration extends beyond the classroom and is reflected in various aspects of school life, including:

Dedicated lessons that explicitly address SMSC and BV themes.

Assemblies and Collective Worship: Opportunities to explore and celebrate these values as a school community.

Praise and Reward System: Recognising and reinforcing behaviors and achievements that align with our SMSC and BV objectives.

We aim to 'live' what is learned and apply it to everyday situations within our school community. This holistic approach ensures that the values and lessons taught are not only understood intellectually but are also practiced and demonstrated in daily interactions and behaviors.

School day
Organisation

School day Organisation

Our school day is thoughtfully structured to provide a balance of academic focus and well-being support. Pupils experience six lessons each day, with core subjects taught in the morning when pupils are most alert and ready to engage. This ensures a strong focus on foundational learning and academic progress.

In addition to the six lessons, each day includes a dedicated **intervention slot** designed to support pupils' emotional, sensory, and regulatory needs. This part of the day is intentionally low-demand and provides opportunities for:

• **Zones of Regulation** activities to support emotional identification and self-management.

• **EHCP-based interventions** tailored to meet individual needs and targets.

• **Mindfulness activities** to promote relaxation and focus.

•**Sensory time** to help pupils recalibrate and prepare for the rest of their day.

This intervention slot is a safe and supportive space where pupils can reflect on their experiences, address any challenges or issues, and regulate their emotions. It ensures pupils end the day with a sense of calm and readiness to begin the next day with a fresh and positive mindset.

Daily reflections are built into this time to encourage pupils to:

• Consider the challenges they faced during the day.

• Reflect on their successes.

• Evaluate the appropriateness of their responses to different situations.

This reflective process promotes self-awareness and helps pupils develop strategies to manage similar situations more effectively in the future.

To further support pupils' ability to manage their day, our school embeds the **TEACCH approach** into our pedagogy. This highly structured approach minimizes unexpected activities that could lead to dysregulation, ensuring predictability and reducing anxiety. By providing a clear and consistent routine, we create an environment where pupils can focus on their learning without unnecessary distractions, fostering a sense of security and stability.