MEPA ACADEMY

CURRICULUM POLICY

Policy information	Detail
Policy owner	Headteacher & Head of Academy
Applies to	Years 7 to 11; academic, vocational and wider curriculum
Updated	July 2026
Review cycle	Annual; next review July 2027

Purpose This policy sets the entitlement, expectations, responsibilities and assurance processes through which MEPA Academy will secure an ambitious, broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum. It is aligned to the Ofsted education inspection framework and state-funded school inspection toolkit in force from November 2025. A policy cannot itself secure or guarantee an inspection grade: exceptional practice must be consistently implemented, evidenced and sustained over time.

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1. POLICY STATEMENT AND CURRICULUM VISION

MEPA Academy's core purpose is to enable young people to become confident, creative and caring citizens who achieve highly. Our academic and vocational curriculum has equal status and is shaped by the academy values DREAM, BELIEVE and ACHIEVE.

The academy will provide a curriculum that is at least as ambitious as the National Curriculum, is broad and balanced, and is deliberately adapted so that all pupils can access its intended knowledge. It will build the knowledge, vocabulary, cultural capital, habits and qualifications pupils need for current learning, the next stage of education or training, employment and adult life.

The curriculum will be especially ambitious for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), pupils known or previously known to children's social care, pupils at early stages of learning English, and any pupil facing barriers to learning or well-being.

2. AIMS

- Secure strong foundations in communication and language, reading, writing and mathematics, including rapid, targeted support for older pupils with gaps.
- Specify and sequence the most important substantive and disciplinary knowledge in every subject so that pupils know more, remember more and can do more.
- Provide sufficient teaching, practice, retrieval and revisiting for knowledge to become secure and usable.
- Deliver consistently expert, clear and responsive teaching, informed by evidence about how pupils learn.
- Identify needs and barriers early; make precise reasonable adjustments without lowering ambition or creating avoidable dependence.
- Develop artistic and technical excellence across the performing arts, alongside strong academic achievement.
- Promote reading, vocabulary, digital and media literacy, personal development, citizenship, health, safety and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Provide impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance, meaningful encounters, options support and preparation for successful transitions.
- Use assessment proportionately to improve teaching and curriculum decisions, avoiding unnecessary workload.
- Sustain high standards, respond rapidly to variation and share proven practice within and beyond the academy.

3. STATUTORY AND FRAMEWORK CONTEXT

This policy should be read alongside the academy's safeguarding, SEND, equality, accessibility, assessment, literacy, behaviour, attendance, relationships and sex education, personal development and careers policies. Leaders will ensure compliance with applicable funding agreement and academy requirements, the Equality Act 2010 (including reasonable adjustments and the Public Sector Equality Duty), the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice, statutory relationships/sex/health education requirements, careers guidance duties and current safeguarding guidance.

4. CURRICULUM ENTITLEMENT AND ARCHITECTURE

4.1 KEY STAGE 3

In Years 7 and 8, pupils receive a broad academic, creative, physical and vocational entitlement. Curriculum time and subject content will allow pupils to build secure foundations before selecting Key Stage 4 pathways. Options guidance will involve pupils and parents/carers and will protect ambition, breadth and progression.

4.2 KEY STAGE 4

In Years 9 to 11, pupils follow an appropriately broad and ambitious programme leading to recognised qualifications. The core includes English language and literature, mathematics and science. Pathways may include humanities, languages, arts, sport, enterprise and performing arts. The precise offer is reviewed annually against pupils' needs, progression routes, statutory expectations, staffing and qualification validity; it is not fixed by this policy.

4.3 VOCATIONAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CURRICULUM

Performing arts is a distinctive strength of the academy's offer. Dance, drama, music and related disciplines will combine sequential technical training, creative and disciplinary knowledge, rehearsal, performance, critique and professional habits. Where appropriate, pupils may access accredited examinations, auditions, visiting professionals, productions and progression support. Participation and adaptations will be planned so pupils facing barriers can belong, contribute and achieve.

4.4 WIDER CURRICULUM

Personal development, relationships and health education, citizenship, careers, enrichment and safeguarding education—including online safety—will be coherently mapped. Leaders will check what pupils learn, not merely what activities are offered. The curriculum will promote respect for protected characteristics, democratic values and thoughtful engagement with diverse communities and viewpoints.

5. CURRICULUM DESIGN: INTENT

- **Ambitious end points:** Each subject identifies the essential knowledge, skills and concepts pupils should secure by defined end points. End points are challenging, meaningful and linked to later study and life.
- **Coherent sequencing:** Curriculum plans show how new learning builds on prior knowledge, where prerequisites are secured, and how complexity increases over time.
- **Subject-specific rigour:** Plans distinguish substantive knowledge from the disciplinary ways pupils think, enquire, create, perform and communicate in each subject.
- **Foundations and vocabulary:** Reading, writing, communication, mathematics and subject vocabulary are explicitly taught where they unlock the wider curriculum.
- **Revisiting and fluency:** Plans provide purposeful opportunities to retrieve, practise, apply and connect important knowledge, while avoiding superficial repetition.
- **Inclusion by design:** Likely barriers are anticipated. Core entitlement remains ambitious; adaptations, scaffolds, resources and reasonable adjustments support access and independence.

- **Context and enrichment:** The curriculum reflects pupils' starting points and community while extending horizons through rich texts, cultural experiences, employers, further and higher education and the arts.
- **Evidence-informed refinement:** Subject leaders refine plans using credible research, assessment, pupil work and voice, implementation evidence and insight from external networks.

6. TEACHING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Teachers enact the intended curriculum through approaches appropriate to the subject, content and pupils. Consistency means shared principles, not a single lesson formula.

- Activate relevant prior knowledge and make the purpose and sequence of new learning clear.
- Explain and model complex ideas and processes precisely, using examples, non-examples and worked demonstrations where helpful.
- Focus attention on the most important knowledge and manage cognitive demand without reducing intellectual ambition.
- Question, observe and use formative assessment systematically to check all pupils' understanding, expose misconceptions and adapt teaching in the lesson and over time.
- Provide sufficient guided and independent practice, retrieval, feedback and purposeful application so learning becomes durable and transferable.
- Teach subject vocabulary, reading and extended communication explicitly, with particular attention to pupils at early stages of English proficiency.
- Deploy additional adults to connect pupils to high-quality teacher instruction and to develop independence rather than dependence.
- Use accessible, accurate and high-quality resources; ensure technology supports curriculum aims and safeguarding.
- Maintain high expectations for participation, quality, presentation and conduct, including in practical, rehearsal and performance settings.

7. ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSIVE ACTION

Assessment will be valid for its intended purpose, proportionate and closely related to the taught curriculum. It will identify what pupils have learned, what remains insecure and what action is needed. Leaders will avoid practices that create excessive workload or distort curriculum breadth.

Assessment purpose	Typical approaches	Required response
In-lesson diagnosis	Questioning, discussion, observation, mini-whiteboards, rehearsal or live practice	Reteach, clarify, adapt examples, scaffold or extend immediately.
Curriculum checks	Low-stakes quizzes, short tasks, reading checks, practical demonstrations	Identify gaps and misconceptions; schedule additional teaching and practice.
Cumulative evaluation	Common assessments, extended work, performances, examinations	Evaluate security across content and groups; refine teaching and curriculum sequencing.
Transition and	Baseline information, qualification	Evaluate readiness for next stages and improve

Assessment purpose	Typical approaches	Required response
destination	outcomes, destinations and progression	pathways and guidance.

Teachers and leaders will triangulate assessment with pupils' work, discussion and classroom evidence. Internal data will be analysed intelligently, including its limitations and small-cohort volatility. Pupils receiving intervention remain entitled to the full curriculum wherever possible; interventions are time-limited, monitored and adjusted or ended according to impact.

8. INCLUSION AND EQUITY

High-quality inclusive teaching is the starting point. Subject teachers retain responsibility for the progress of every pupil in their classes and work with the SENCo, designated teacher, safeguarding leaders, pastoral staff, parents/carers, pupils and specialists.

- Use accurate and current information about need, prior attainment, language proficiency, attendance, well-being and lived experience—without allowing labels to cap expectations.
- Apply a graduated assess–plan–do–review cycle where additional or different provision is needed; implement EHC plans and specialist advice.
- Plan precise reasonable adjustments and accessible resources, considering benefits and possible unintended consequences.
- Monitor access, participation, belonging, independence, progress, achievement, enrichment and destinations for relevant groups.
- Act rapidly where any group experiences weaker implementation or outcomes; evaluate whether action makes a sustained difference.
- Ensure any alternative provision is suitable, safe, ambitious, regularly monitored and integrated with the pupil's curriculum and next steps

9. READING, COMMUNICATION AND MATHEMATICS FOUNDATIONS

Leaders will make early and accurate assessment of foundational knowledge a priority. Pupils who are not yet fluent readers or who have gaps in communication, writing or mathematics will receive evidence-informed, targeted teaching from suitably trained staff. Support will be frequent enough to accelerate learning, connected to the wider curriculum and reviewed for impact.

A consistent approach to reading will include systematic synthetic phonics where needed, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and access to ambitious texts. Every subject will identify its distinctive reading, writing, speaking, mathematical and representational demands and teach them explicitly.

10. PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE AND DEVELOPMENT

Leaders will protect and develop subject and phase expertise. Induction, curriculum collaboration, coaching and professional development will be sequenced, practised and evaluated for impact on teaching and pupils—not judged by attendance alone. Where expertise is limited, leaders will secure timely support through internal specialists, partnerships, subject associations, examination boards or other credible sources.

11. LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Role	Core responsibilities
Governing body	Approve the policy; assure statutory compliance, ambition, inclusion, resources and impact; challenge variation and monitor improvement without creating unnecessary workload.
Headteacher	Set culture and strategy; secure curriculum breadth, staffing, time and professional learning; ensure accurate self-evaluation and timely improvement.
Curriculum senior leader	Coordinate architecture, implementation, assessment and quality assurance; report strengths, variation, group impact and priority actions.
SENCo / inclusion leaders	Lead identification, graduated response, reasonable adjustments and evaluation of access, independence, belonging and outcomes.
Subject leaders	Define end points and sequencing; build staff expertise; assure enacted curriculum and pupil learning; act on variation and share effective practice.
Teachers	Know the curriculum and pupils; teach, assess and adapt expertly; maintain ambition; contribute to evaluation and professional learning.
Pupils and parents/carers	Contribute views on access, experience, relevance and support; engage with options, review and transition processes.

12. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Quality assurance will be developmental, proportionate and grounded in the academy's normal work. No single data point or observation will determine a judgement. Leaders will examine the intended curriculum, its enactment and what pupils have learned across subjects, phases and groups.

- Review curriculum plans, resources and assessment for ambition, coherence, subject rigour, accessibility and statutory coverage.
- Undertake joint visits to lessons, rehearsals and practical work; discuss what is typical with staff and pupils.
- Sample pupils' work and performances over time, including case samples for pupils facing barriers.
- Evaluate reading and mathematical foundations, participation, attendance, achievement, qualifications, enrichment and destinations.
- Use pupil, staff and parent/carer voice to test access, challenge, safety, belonging and workload.
- Identify precise strengths and improvement priorities, named owners, milestones and intended pupil impact.
- Revisit actions to determine whether improvements are embedded, consistent and sustained.

Response standard Where evidence shows variation or a barrier, leaders will diagnose the cause, act promptly, check implementation and evaluate impact. Significant weaknesses will be explicitly prioritised. Strong practice will be codified, sustained and shared without masking continuing areas for development.

13. EXCEPTIONAL-STANDARD COMMITMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following commitments translate the current Ofsted toolkit's exceptional criteria into routine leadership practice. They are not a checklist or a claim that the threshold has already been reached.

Exceptional criterion	MEPA commitment	Routine evidence and assurance
Strong standard secured	Maintain accurate evaluation across every subject and phase; address inconsistency rapidly.	Subject reviews, work and performance sampling, pupil discussions, assessment and implementation follow-up.
Sustained exceptionally high standards	Track whether coherent curriculum and highly responsive teaching are embedded over time, not dependent on isolated staff or cohorts.	Multi-year review record, staff expertise and retention, moderation, qualification and wider curriculum evidence.
Knowledge and skills develop quickly and securely	Prioritise foundations, essential knowledge, practice and precise formative response.	Reading/mathematics checks, curriculum assessments, observed response to misconceptions, pupils' explanations and application.
Transformational impact for pupils facing barriers	Evaluate whether access, belonging, independence, achievement and readiness improve exceptionally, adjusting strategies skilfully.	Case samples, quantitative and qualitative group analysis, pupil/parent voice, provision reviews, destinations.
No unprioritised significant weakness	Keep a candid improvement record with owners, milestones, resources and governing-body oversight.	Improvement plan, risk and issue logs, review minutes and evidence of completed follow-up.
Improvement and external contribution	Use proven expertise to improve the whole academy and share practice responsibly beyond it.	Cross-subject development, partnerships, network contributions and evaluated reciprocal learning.

14. MONITORING INDICATORS

Leaders and governors will consider trends and differences, not impose universal numerical targets through this policy. The evidence set will normally include:

- curriculum breadth, pathway take-up and entitlement by pupil group;
- security of foundational reading, writing, communication and mathematics;
- curriculum assessment and quality of work or performance over time;
- attainment, progress and qualification outcomes, interpreted in context;
- attendance, suspensions, participation, enrichment and pupil belonging;
- implementation and impact of adaptations, interventions and alternative provision;
- staff subject knowledge, curriculum confidence and professional-development impact;
- pupil destinations and sustained participation in education, employment or training;
- evidence that improvement actions are implemented, embedded and sustained.

15. REVIEW, PUBLICATION AND EQUALITY IMPACT

The governing body will review this policy at least annually and sooner following material changes to legislation, statutory guidance, qualification requirements, the inspection framework or the academy's context. The policy will be accessible to staff and published or made available as

required. Leaders will consider equality impact when changing curriculum structures, pathways, timetables, entry decisions or access arrangements.

APPENDIX A: SUBJECT CURRICULUM MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS

- A concise rationale, ambitious end points and a clear description of what pupils will know and be able to do.
- A sequenced curriculum showing prerequisites, increasing complexity, planned revisiting and links to future learning.
- Identification of substantive and disciplinary knowledge, vocabulary, reading and relevant mathematical demands.
- Planned checks for understanding and cumulative assessment aligned to taught content.
- Anticipated barriers, reasonable adjustments and approaches that promote access and independence.
- High-quality resources and guidance that enable teachers to enact the curriculum as intended.
- A plan for staff subject knowledge and pedagogical development.
- A proportionate evaluation cycle using multiple sources of evidence and recording consequential action.

APPENDIX B: POLICY ASSURANCE QUESTIONS

1. Is the curriculum ambitious, broad and balanced for every pupil, including those facing barriers?
2. Can leaders explain the most important knowledge, its sequence and end points in each subject?
3. Does teaching typically enable pupils to secure and use that knowledge, and is variation addressed quickly?
4. Are foundational gaps identified accurately and addressed with sufficient expertise, time and practice?
5. Do adaptations reduce barriers while preserving challenge, entitlement and independence?
6. What shows that pupils know more, remember more and can do more across the curriculum?
7. What is the experience and impact for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and other groups facing barriers?
8. Which strengths are sustained and transferable, and which weaknesses are explicitly prioritised?
9. How has professional development changed practice and pupil learning?
10. Where practice is genuinely strong and sustained, how is learning shared internally and externally?

REFERENCES

- Ofsted, Education inspection framework: for use from November 2025.
- Ofsted, State-funded school inspection toolkit, version 1.1 (updated 5 November 2025).
- Department for Education, National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4.
- Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care, SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Department for Education, Keeping children safe in education (current edition).
- Equality Act 2010; Children and Families Act 2014; relevant academy funding agreement and statutory guidance.