



ASPIRATIONS

No Limits: A Curriculum For Success In The 21st Century

The No Limits Curriculum is unique to the Aspirations Academies Trust. Our aim is to transform education through doing things differently and authentically. Our vision is for children from the age of 2 to 18 to achieve high levels of success in a broad range of examinations at a variety of ages, whilst at the same time equipping them with the knowledge and skills required to play an active and successful role in today's highly competitive, fast-changing 21st century world.

The No Limits curriculum delivers the full curriculum in KS2 and KS3. Students are taught the full National Curriculum, and more, through several different learning approaches. These are designed to challenge and engage students allowing them to acquire and apply knowledge, whilst also adding cultural capital and developing future skills. No Limits allows students to experience:

- Single discipline subjects
- Transdiscipline assignments (Applied Transdisciplinary Learning - ATL)
- Assessment, Presentation and Personal Education (APP) Weeks
- Innovation and Development weeks

All Aspirations Academies follow the 'No limits: Curriculum for success in the 21st century'. The curriculum was introduced in September 2019 into Years 4, 7 and 12. Today the No limits Curriculum is followed by all pupils in KS2 and Year 8. A great deal of planning and trialling of the curriculum ideas is involved in the continual development of this curriculum.

Central to this philosophy for the curriculum is that it should provide an authentic education for the world today. This requires the curriculum to allow for the development of the knowledge, skills and qualifications required for success. Children should always learn in a challenging, engaging and supportive environment. We also believe that there should be a coherence in the delivery and content of the curriculum across all phases of education.

The intent of the curriculum is:

Aspirations Academies curriculum aims are to develop a high quality curriculum carefully designed to:

1. Ensure a broad curriculum coverage
2. Develop a knowledge rich curriculum
3. Ensure that knowledge acquisition is enhanced through being effectively applied to real-life situations and problems
4. Widen knowledge acquisition through single discipline and transdiscipline learning
5. Ensure all learning is challenging and engaging
6. Develop transferable future skills through the application of knowledge into actions for success.
7. Ensure high rates of progress for all pupils.
8. Promote teacher planning that is integral to the success of the curriculum and also manageable.

Our aim is to ensure No Limits delivers high rates of pupil progress in:

- A. Development of knowledge: Progress in knowing more and remembering more, in other words making changes to pupils' long-term memories. The future requires the acquisition and application of a wide range of knowledge.
- B. The ability to apply knowledge: Progress in knowledge being applied in more challenging, relevant and more engaging ways.
- C. The acquisition of future skills: In order to translate knowledge into actions for success.

Why No Limits?

Aspirations has developed very good systems and structures for turning poorly-performing schools into good or outstanding schools (as defined by Ofsted and DfE performance measures). However, we have an increasing desire to move away from the current 'traditional' knowledge-based, single subject approach to learning, towards a provision that delivers 21st century skills, challenging and engaging learning, alongside high-level qualifications. We aim to provide each individual student with the keys to a successful life, also, importantly, to give them the opportunity to compete on the global stage.

There are a number of curriculum issues we have struggled with over the years:

- Teaching in Year 6, Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 is primarily focussed on passing knowledge based exams.
- Pupils can be passively disengaged in lessons where there is too much direct teacher instruction
- Generally we are not challenging the more able enough
- The excellent literacy and numeracy work developed in primary schools is often not continued in secondary schools - Year 7 and Year 8 students sometimes regress in these areas
- The transition from Year 6 to Year 7 is an issue - pupils move from one or two teachers to up to ten teachers - this develops a lack of belonging and prevents good student/teacher relationships. Year 7 should be an exciting year, with a new school, often better school facilities and new friends. In reality, most students go backwards or do not progress as much as they should. Primary education has generally improved greatly over the past ten years. The focus on English, Maths and a transdiscipline creative curriculum helps to provide a relevant and high quality education. As pupils generally only have, at the most, two teachers, and are taught mostly in the same group for all subjects, there is a real connection, good teacher-pupil relationships, good behaviour and a sense of belonging.
- Too much time is wasted in secondary schools in moving between lessons
- The curriculum in secondaries is 'siloed' into several different subjects which does not help knowledge application
- The curriculum in primaries is sometimes not broad enough
- Employers do not think schools are delivering young people with the right skills - there is a skills gap
- Ofsted is placing a greater emphasis on curriculum
- Teacher recruitment and retention is getting harder
- Exclusions and mental health issues in children are increasing

There is a growing disconnect between the present outputs of our education system at all levels and the wide range of skills demanded by the many different stakeholders in this fast changing world - whether these are employers, the environment, or society in general. The world is changing and our education system needs to evolve with it.

Education needs to help develop the skills needed today by the world of work, this has perhaps been the main driving force behind this new curriculum. School leaders have a duty to prepare our young people for success in this world both today and tomorrow. In order to ensure the development of a curriculum that ensures a depth of knowledge, the application of knowledge and the development of future skills, the central feature of the 'No Limits' model is the development of a curriculum that fully embraces both single-discipline learning and Applied Transdiscipline Learning. Both have a place in the curriculum. We believe that students cannot successfully progress to inquiry-based methods without a strong foundation of knowledge, gained through teacher-directed learning. Also, as effective inquiry-based teaching is inherently more challenging to deliver, the 'No limits' curriculum has been extensively planned, developing high-quality lesson plans, well resourced and there has been extensive CPD and support put in place.

The No Limits curriculum:

- Delivers a broader curriculum coverage in KS2
- Improves the transition between KS2 and KS3:
 - Improved T + L in Year 7 + 8
 - Greater continuity of learning
 - Greater sense of belonging.
- Enables greater student engagement and challenge
- Is designed to deliver higher levels of progress and improved academic results
- Develops appropriately high levels of 21st century employability skills
- Provides greater teacher satisfaction and reduced workload - all planning conducted in the working week
- Develops a greater depth of knowledge
- Enables the greater application of knowledge
- Allows for compliance with employability/careers expectations
- Provides greater compliance with new Ofsted framework

The Skills Gap

Change is happening fast and our students are growing up in a world where jobs are not certain or guaranteed. According to the World Economic Forum, 65% of the jobs of the future have not been developed yet and around 40% of the five year old students in schools today will possibly need to be self-employed to have any form of income. The report “Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained: Workforce Transitions in a Time of Automation,” published in December 2017 by McKinsey Global Institute, reached similar conclusions. A total of 60 million to 375 million individuals around the world may need to transition to new occupational categories by 2030, McKinsey predicted, based on an analysis that covers 46 countries and reaches almost 90% of the global gross domestic product. McKinsey estimates that activities within all occupations will shift. New work will evolve, requiring “more application of expertise, interaction and management,” as well as “social and emotional skills and advanced cognitive capabilities, such as high-level logical reasoning.” As only a limited number of jobs require these capabilities today, developing such skills should be a challenge for education, which currently rarely puts an emphasis on these ‘soft skills.’

To create a progressive and future-focused education system our belief is that it needs to be centred around the life skills required to be a contributing citizen of the world, have a focus on thinking, and the practical applications of knowledge and understanding using a transdisciplinary approach. This approach links concepts and skills through a real-world context. Transdisciplinary learning requires students to find answers to questions and is best practice for today’s fast growing and ever-changing world. We need to ensure that we are preparing our students to solve real world problems and allowing them to authentically create and build their own ideas. We need to foster skills, knowledge and characteristics in young people that allow them to feel open to and confident in the face of ambiguity and complexity. This transdisciplinary approach promotes depth of understanding as well as competency in the skills needed to succeed in our dynamically changing world. It encourages an educational approach with no limits, no barriers to learning.

It is important to understand the full force of the changes impacting currently on our world. There are six key ‘Drivers of change’ which represent global issues and trends driving change across the world. These are big, disruptive shifts changing how we work and learn:

- Extreme longevity: People are living longer
- Rise of smart machines and systems: Technology allows us to enhance our own capabilities.
- Computational world: Data enables us to see patterns and systems on a scale never before possible.
- New media ecology: New communication tools require media literacies beyond text.
- Superstructured organisations: Social technologies allow us the scale and reach formerly dominated by large organisations.
- Globally connected world: Global interconnectivity requires organisations to diversify and be adaptable.

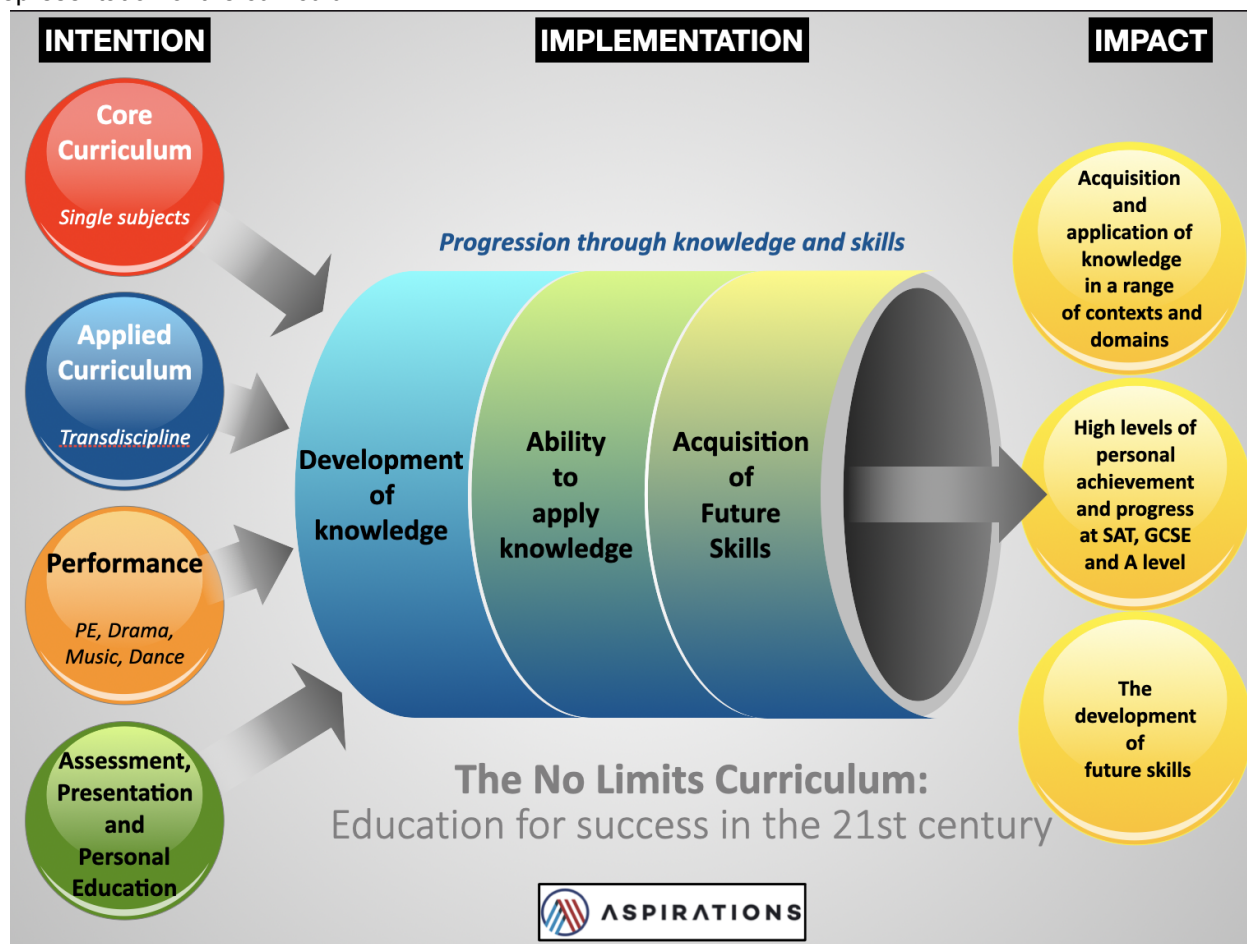
Exactly what are the future skills we need our young people to develop to succeed in the world today?

- Communication and interpersonal skills: Can you connect with others effectively? Can you sense and stimulate reactions and interactions?
- Resilience: Can you overcome setbacks and challenges? Are you flexible with change and stable in demanding situations?
- Critical thinking: Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally, understanding the logical connection between ideas
- Initiative: Initiative is the ability to be resourceful and work without always being told what to do
- Complex problem-solving: Complex problem solving skills are the developed capacities used to solve novel, ill-defined problems in complex, real-world settings
- Productivity and accountability: Can you create a product and take responsibility for its performance?

We live in a connected world, now more than ever before. People need to increasingly depend on others to share knowledge, ideas, leads, opportunities, creativity, political support, financial capital, goodwill, and so on. We need contributions from others if we are to get our jobs done, achieve our goals, and fulfil our missions in life. The best performers in the future will be those who invest in and capitalise on the network of connections and resources, building powerful professional communities.

The Curriculum Design

Curriculum design is focussed on three terms: intent, implementation and impact. This systematic approach equates well with the idea of input, process and output. The intent or input into the curriculum provides a range of learning styles, approaches to learning and delivery vehicles for knowledge, the application of knowledge and the development of skills. These inputs, or intent, are the core curriculum subjects, the applied transdiscipline curriculum, the performance subjects and the APP delivery weeks. Progression through the development and application of knowledge and skills is of central importance to the implementation phase. This process leads to the impact or output of high levels of achievement and progress, alongside the development of future skills. This diagram provides a visual representation of the curriculum:



Curriculum Delivery

Students are taught the full National Curriculum, and more, through several different learning approaches. These are designed to challenge and engage students allowing them to acquire and apply knowledge, whilst also adding cultural capital and developing future skills:

- Single discipline subjects
- Transdiscipline assignments
- Assessment, Presentation and Personal Education (APP) Weeks
- Innovation and Development weeks

Applied Transdisciplinary Learning (ATL) means learning between, across and beyond different disciplines, that is relevant to the real world and applied to real practical situations. The goal is to access, analyse and synthesise information and knowledge over several disciplines in order to understand the operation and issues facing the world today and in the future. All the Applied Transdiscipline Learning is delivered through assignments that integrate several subjects.

In Key Stage 2 the majority of these assignments last for three weeks, in Years 7 and 8 they are between 3 and 6 weeks, and in Year 12 they last for 6 weeks. All learning blocks last for two hours and there are three or four of these learning blocks in a week in KS2, three in KS3. The length of time spent on an assignment provides a great many options for a range of approaches to learning, however the end product is a high quality product/presentation of their findings/suggestions by students.

Planning

Planning the learning in the ATL assignments is perhaps the most important aspect of the No Limits curriculum. There are several planning principles that need to be adhered to:

- Planning needs to be done in teams of teachers
- Teachers need to be given sufficient planning time in the working week
- Planning should follow the No Limits planning process guidelines
- The daily lesson plan should use the challenge and engagement planning grid
- Planning should develop each year - the learning should be different year on year to keep it fresh and relevant
- Teachers need to be trained in ATL and also be regularly exposed to industry in order to be aware of relevant needs.
- All outline planning MUST be quality assured by the ATL lead teacher

The Assignments

The Assignments run for up to three weeks, 2 hours a day, 4 days a week in Key Stage 2 and run for 6 hours per week over up to six weeks in Years 7 and 8. Each assignment is planned in detail with the outcome being an end product, a written report and a group presentation and exhibition. Each assignment is advertised around the academy through the use of posters:

ASPIRATIONS
PRESENTS

SHAKESPEARE RE-DESIGNED

DESCRIPTION

STUDENTS WILL RESEARCH, DESIGN, ACT, RECORD AND EDIT A KEY SCENE FROM "ROMEO AND JULIET." STUDENTS WILL DELIVER THEIR SECTIONS OF THE PLAY AGAINST CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND OF A DIFFERENT ERA, AND PREVIOUSLY STUDIED IN HISTORY.

START DATE	LENGTH	EXHIBITION
09/12/19	6 WEEKS	3/02/20

SUBJECTS COVERED	PRODUCTS	FUTURE SKILLS
ENGLISH: Analysis of literature HISTORY: Significance, cause and consequence of WW1 BIOLOGY: Human reproduction	Film composed of different recorded scenes PUBLIC AUDIENCE/ PARTNERS Local theatre companies, actors and authors	Communication, media literacy, productivity and accountability. Creative and adaptive thinking. Cognitive load management

THE DRIVING QUESTION: HOW CAN WE, AS YEAR 7 STUDENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY, IMAGINE KEY THEMES OF SHAKESPEARE'S WORK IN A DIFFERENT ERA?

Assessment

ATL assignments, if planned well, will significantly enhance a student's preparation for national assessments. The assignment assessment process must ensure that students have not only memorised knowledge, but can also show understanding and real world connections of the standards. Assessment does not only have to take the form of a written test, there is also assessment through performance, product, and demonstration of knowledge. Applied Trans-discipline Learning Assignment assessment should always primarily relate to the work of an individual student, even when they are working as part of a group. Assessment should also be both formative and summative. It should also be focussed on a student's progress against their Academy academic targets.

Driving question and key questions

Each Assignment has a driving question (There is no reason why each single subject lesson should not use this approach).

The driving question provides the purpose of the assignment learning for students and teachers. It sets the context for the assignment and links to the content standards. The DQ should be clear, provocative, open-ended, challenging and linked to the core of what teachers want students to learn.

A good driving question meets the following criteria:

- Engaging for students. It is understandable and interesting to students, and it provokes further questions and focuses their inquiry process.
- Open-ended. There are several possible answers/solutions, and it cannot simply be Googled.
- Aligned with learning goals. To answer it, students will need to learn and apply the targeted content knowledge and skills.

Examples of good driving questions that fulfil this criteria & why they work so well in achieving the aim of the No Limits curriculum:

How can we, as Local Public Health Directors, prepare a response plan to the spread of the next infectious disease and/or public health concern?

How can we, as Global Citizens, understand climate change in order to initiate eco-friendly practices at our Academy?

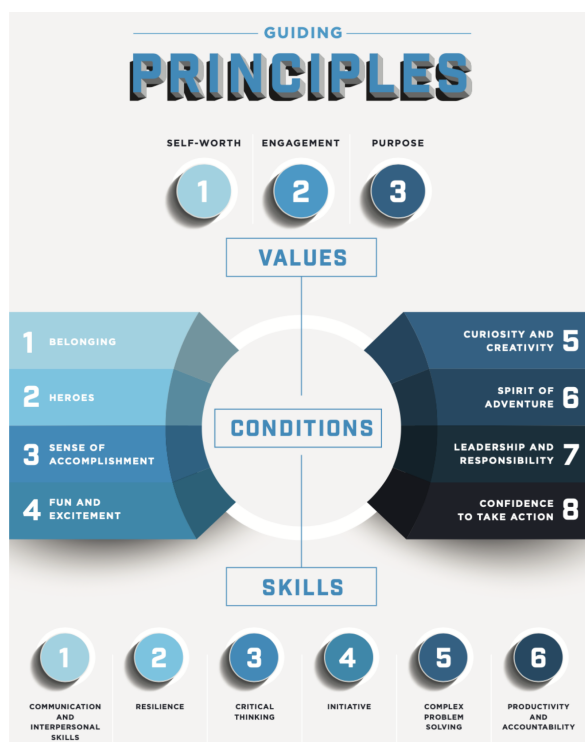
These driving questions allow students to engage in context related real-world problems. By instantly engaging in authentic learning, they are immersed in a problem that affects their current and future lives. Through these driving questions, pupils are taught to apply the key skills needed for the workplace, especially developing interpersonal and communication skills.

Each assignment starts with three questions:

- What do students already know?
- What do students need to know?
- Where can this new knowledge be found or learnt?

Using this approach it allows teachers to measure student progress in their knowledge acquisition and development.

The No Limits curriculum fully incorporates the Aspirations Academies Trust vision and purpose based on the Aspirations Framework:



Aspirations Vision is:

'To empower future generations to follow their dreams and to build a society of which we can all be proud.'

Aspirations purpose is:

'To reinvent education for the 21st century. To use technology and modern pedagogies to give children from 2 to 18 the knowledge, skills and mindsets to achieve excellence in a fast-changing world. At Aspirations Academies, we provide a challenging, engaging and supportive environment to bring out the best in every child.'