

**Armadale Academy’s Curriculum Rationale**

*Our Curriculum Rationale describes our approach to the curriculum at Armadale Academy and why it is designed in this way. It is a living document which is regularly reviewed and refreshed in light of our changing learner needs and in response to stakeholder feedback.*

**Our context**

Armadale Academy is a six year, non-denominational comprehensive school serving the communities of Armadale, Blackridge and Bathgate. Our community is growing and changing and our school roll has risen from around 800 to over 1000 over the past five years. Our SIMD distribution peaks in deciles 4 (27.7%) and 9 (17.7%), the latter due to significant housing development in the area recently. Our SIMD distribution can be deceptive: those in decile 9 tend to be from traditional Armadale families now living in new build houses but without the support networks, connections and experience of higher education that decile 9 learners might benefit from in other schools. Historically, we have a higher than average leaver rate at the end of S4 and S5. Where traditionally our learners went into employment or further education, there has also been a significant rise in numbers going on to university over the past five years. In this context, our challenge is to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of all of our learners. Like all schools, we also have a gap between the attainment and achievement of learners in our highest deciles and those who face poverty related barriers to learning and are working hard together to address this. Our strong commitment to achievement as well as attainment for all of our learners at the highest possible levels is summed up in our mission statement, “Learning Together, Achieving Together”, and in our school values: Ambition, Achievement, Positive Attitude, Equity, Community and Respect.

In session 2016-17 we carried out significant work as a school community to evaluate our curriculum and develop a three year plan which will enable us to further improve. We are now in a process of ongoing collaborative self-evaluation involving all stakeholders.

Our rationale is supported by a range of policies and papers: a high level curriculum map, skills framework, position papers, Learning and Teaching policy, Assessment and Moderation policy, Tracking, Monitoring and Reporting policy and Homework policy.

**The purpose of the curriculum**

Our curriculum should support every learner’s journey, enabling them to develop the skills and qualities they need to become Successful Learners, Effective Contributors, Responsible Citizens and Confident Individuals. We work with our young people to maximise their attainment and achievement, through being ambitious and showing a positive attitude as well as respect for each other and the wider school community, thus improving the life chances of all and helping them to achieve a sustained positive destination. Our curriculum therefore offers a flexible structure which is relevant, progressive and motivating for all.

**Overall aims of the curriculum:**

* A smooth and progressive transition between primary and secondary for all
* A variety of enjoyable, challenging and personalised learning experiences for all
* Opportunities for all learners as well as staff and parents to be involved in the ethos and life of the school
* Achievement pathways and recognised qualifications in personal achievement for all
* Progression pathways for all learners leading to national qualifications at the highest possible levels
* Skills development for all learners including the opportunity to develop skills for work
* Sustained positive destinations for all

**The Broad General Education S1-S3**

The purpose of our Broad General Education is to enable all of our learners to make progress from their prior levels of attainment and achievement. It is important that learners have the opportunity to experience depth and challenge in their learning at this stage so that they are able to embark on learning at the highest possible levels in the Senior Phase, leading to SQA attainment and achievement.

In S1, young people will experience a broad range of learning experiences through subject areas, Interdisciplinary Learning and opportunities for Personal Achievement. This will enable them to make informed choices about curricular choices when moving through their learning journey, supported by key adults in the school who know them well. Skills development is a vital part of the curriculum and S1s continue their skills development from primary school by reflecting on the skills they will require for learning, life and work and their own development of these through the curriculum at Armadale Academy. To ensure that the needs of all learners are met and strive towards equity for all, we offer additional programmes in S1 such as Accelerated Reading, Maths Recovery, School of Football and other learning opportunities in partnership with the Inclusion and Wellbeing Team for West Lothian Council.

In S2, our young people will continue to experience learning through subject areas, Interdisciplinary Learning and opportunities for Personal Achievement. They will experience increasing depth and challenge in the curriculum and will have the opportunity to achieve up to the end of at least level 3 Curriculum for Excellence across all curricular areas. Skills acquisition continues across the curriculum and there are increased opportunities for personalisation and choice at this stage, with S2 being able to specialise within Expressive Arts, Technologies, Health and Wellbeing or Languages. These options allow for further depth and challenge in learning and provide pathways into S3 and beyond. We continue to offer additional programmes at this stage, building on the S1 experience, which will help achieve equity for all.

Our S3 curriculum focuses on developing depth and coherence in learners’ skill base and knowledge, giving a strong grounding for attainment and achievement in the Senior Phase. Learners will continue to study English, Maths, French and the core subjects of PE, PSE and RME, then will select additional courses from within the eight curricular areas, most of which will lead to qualifications in the Senior Phase. Choices are made in partnership with parents and with support from key adults in school who know the young person well. Formal study towards qualifications does not begin until S4 as we strongly believe that S3 should be about breadth, depth, challenge and enjoyment in learning, giving our young people additional time to mature and reflect on the qualifications they would like to focus on in the Senior Phase. In response to learner feedback, we have introduced opportunities for Interdisciplinary Learning (Scottish Studies) and certificated Personal Achievement (including a range of options such as Mandarin, Employability Award, Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Crest Science Award). These opportunities will help our learners to apply their growing skills and knowledge in context and grow in confidence through having their achievements formally recognised. In recognition of the fact that a group of our learners require focused skills for work opportunities at this stage, we offer tailored programmes in school and through local partnerships according to individual needs.

**The Senior Phase S4-S6**

The purpose of the Senior Phase is to enable our learners to acquire the formal qualifications and develop the skills and personal attributes that they will need to be successful in their chosen positive destination when they leave us. We have integrated our Senior Phase S4-S6 to open up flexible pathways so that all of our learners can have their needs met and can make progress. To this end, we offer a number of vocational and Skills for Work pathways, in partnership with West Lothian College, and a wide range of Highers and Advanced Highers, in partnership with the West Lothian Learning Campus. We encourage all learners to show high levels of ambition and to challenge themselves as much as they can in their learning.

In S4, learners will begin formal study for National Qualifications. At present, most learners study six N4 or N5 courses in S4, usually selected from the range of courses studied in S3, as well as the SQA Wellbeing award, introduced last session in response to learner feedback that more opportunities for certificated personal achievement and a greater focus on student wellbeing were needed at this stage. This model allows depth of study, while also providing the opportunity for skills development for all through our personal achievement pathway. Learners are given a high level of support from staff to help them select the right courses for their interests and future aspirations. All learners will work towards a qualification in English and Maths at the highest possible level as these are key subjects needed for further study and employment on leaving school. Career management skills have a more prominent role to play at this stage for all learners and we provide many opportunities, working with our partners, to help learners develop knowledge of the world of work and careers of interest to them including planned opportunities for work experience. At this stage, learners may opt to follow West Lothian College courses for part of their school week that will lead to further education opportunities or to employment. Other tailored programmes are available to suit individual needs at this stage.

In S5, students continue to build on their prior learning and work towards further qualifications. Progression may be towards more challenging courses, such as Highers, or may focus on a broader range of qualifications, for example at National 4 or National 5 level. Learners will follow either five or six courses depending on the level of study. Our personal achievement pathway continues into S5, with all learners expected to achieve a Personal Development qualification that allows them to further develop skills acquired during earlier stages of learning. Personal Development is an embedded and valued part of the life of Armadale Academy and its community and we strongly believe that the skills learners develop here are excellent preparation for life, helping them to develop respect for each other and for their community as well as other skills for learning, life and work. A range of learning opportunities at West Lothian College enhance the wide range of options available in the school and there are also tailored programmes available at this stage including the Career Ready programme to mentor young people and support them into their chosen career.

In S6, continued acquisition of qualifications continues to be a focus, with each learner closely supported to ensure they continue to be as ambitious as possible for themselves and maximise their qualifications by the end of their learning journey at Armadale. All S6 learners are also expected to be actively involved in the school community throughout the year, taking on leadership roles, mentoring younger students, volunteering and working in the local community. We have developed a range of personal achievement awards such as Leadership and the Religion, Belief and Values Award so that learners can continue to develop their skills in the widest sense for their future destination. We work closely with partners including Skills Development Scotland and Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools as part of a programme to promote a range of opportunities at university, college and in the world of work. Through this programme, we support all of our young people into their chosen destination, for example through help with writing UCAS statements for universities, support with writing job applications and CVs and advice on money management.

The curriculum that we have developed at Armadale Academy, in partnership with our stakeholders, is tailored to the unique context of our school and the needs of our young people. We strive for continuous improvement in our curriculum as the needs of our student cohort change, in pursuit of the very best outcomes our young people can achieve.