



Curriculum Policy

Secondary

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Laurus Vision

The Laurus Vision is for everyone regardless of background or circumstance to be inspired, to thrive in all environments, to recognise what it takes to succeed, to set aspirational goals and work hard to achieve them.

A curriculum cannot sit as a separate entity. It is the sum of all the parts of a school. It is underpinned by the core values and purpose of a school but, at the same time, is fundamental in establishing and maintaining its ethos. It is the day-to-day classroom experiences, the opportunities to develop and showcase potential and the co-curricular opportunities that are provided. It is the way ideas and beliefs are communicated, the questions that are asked and the ways in which expectations and relationships are established and secured. It is a key part in what makes a Laurus school unique. Our curriculum is the means through which our vision will be achieved.

Core Curriculum Principals

“Social class differences in achievement, in access to top universities and in entry into the professions have increased not decreased in the past decade. This is confirmed time and again by the data on social mobility. This may not be the direct result of past curriculum reforms; however, it is inconceivable that such trends to greater inequality will be reversed if a knowledge-led curriculum is not extended to the majority.”

(Michael Young, 2014)

As at Trust we believe in the importance of powerful knowledge and deep mastery. Students should be explicitly taught the academic language needed to be academically successful. They should be provided with as broad and deep a knowledge base as possible so that they can think as broadly and deeply as possible. Our curriculum structure is based on students developing a core body of knowledge.

Our students have an entitlement to knowledge that will take them beyond their experience. This ‘entitlement to knowledge’ is the starting point for curriculum design.

The curriculum and pedagogical design should enable all students to acquire knowledge that takes them beyond their experience. To acquire knowledge which many will not have access to at home, among their friends, or in their communities in which they live. Access to this knowledge is the ‘right’ of all students as future citizens. This is their entitlement. Socially disadvantaged students should receive the same education as those in the best schools nationally.

Curriculum choices have to be addressed for what they are: alternative ways of promoting the intellectual development of young people. Intellectual development is a concept based not a content-based or skill-based process. This means that the curriculum should be concept-based. However, concepts are always about something. They imply some content and not other. Content is therefore required in order to develop concept – without content students will not develop their understanding and progress in their learning.

The key distinguishing feature of a knowledge-led curriculum based on an ‘entitlement to knowledge’ principle, is that the issue of the knowledge an organisation wants its student to have access to is its starting point.

The purpose of a knowledge led curriculum is to build the architecture of long-term memory. Domain specific skills will develop as knowledge becomes both deep and broad. A knowledge-led curriculum does not ignore the development of domain specific skills, such as analysis and evaluation, but accepts that these are built upon deep and broad content knowledge.

Knowledge is not without facts; facts are a key foundation. However, facts alone are not knowledge. True knowledge allows those who access it to question it and the authority on which it is based. To gain the sense of freedom and excitement that it can offer creating a ‘rich inner life’.

‘There is nothing elitist about powerful knowledge. What is elitist is the suggestion that such knowledge belongs to an elite.’ (Christodoulou, 2014)

A knowledge led curriculum is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a great education.

Cornerstones

Our academic curriculum is knowledge led and ensures that the needs and talents of all students are recognised and developed.

The curriculum is not however confined to the classroom. It encompasses every aspect of our students' experience whilst being a member of our community.

As a Trust we recognise that academic success alone is not enough. It is therefore important that alongside a clear focus on academic achievement there is the development of the human capital needed to succeed via a clear rational pedagogy.

“Rational pedagogy – the attempt to counteract inequalities in the cultural preparation of different classes, not by making concessions to subjugated cultures but by inculcating dominant culture into disadvantaged groups”
(Burawoy and von Holdt, 2011)

Laurus schools will develop desired qualities, attitudes and habits via a rational pedagogy through our four Cornerstones.

Academic Aspiration

Our vision is for all of our students, regardless of background and circumstance, to make outstanding progress and achieve grades which will open the door to the future of their choice. We want our students to be curious and develop a thirst for knowledge; we want them to be resilient and to value effort; we want them to understand that sometimes failure is an essential part of the learning process and to recognise that developing a positive, 'can do' attitude will help them to set and achieve aspirational goals.

Culture, Creativity & Rhetoric

Alongside our high aspirations for academic success, we passionately believe in the importance of education in its broadest sense and we will ensure the fullest possible participation in art, music and drama. We want our students to appreciate that great writing gives us access to ideas which challenge our thinking; that the power of language gives us the opportunity to make our voice heard and present our own ideas with courage, conviction and impact; that the Arts open up worlds which we might not otherwise inhabit. We will ensure that students from all backgrounds are able to discover new talents and interests and develop existing ones.

Competition and Physical Endeavour

We believe that physical activity and competition, both inter and intra school, are vital to the holistic development of young people, fostering their physical, social and emotional health. We want our students to approach competition with optimism and vitality; to relish the opportunity to demonstrate determination, creativity and perseverance in order to overcome challenges; to understand that hard work and commitment lead to a greater chance of success and that obstacles are temporary but achievement lasts for a lifetime.

Leadership and Service

We value individuality, celebrate diversity and encourage our students to have the confidence to think for themselves, whilst emphasising the importance of tolerance, teamwork and collective responsibility. We place great importance on both leadership and participation and encourage students from all backgrounds to take on roles of responsibility and engage in School and House activities. By the time they leave us, we want each student to have that true sense of self worth which will enable them to make wise choices, stand up for what is right and what they believe in and, in doing so, be of value to society.

Qualities, attitudes & habits

Laurus schools will develop the following qualities, attitudes and habits via a rational pedagogy.

Courage	Not running from or avoiding challenge; speaking up for what's right
Vitality	Approaching life with excitement and energy; feeling alive and activated
Self-control	Regulating what one feels and how one behaves; being self-disciplined
Social intelligence	Being aware of motives and feelings of other people and oneself
Optimism	Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it
Perseverance	Finishing what one starts; completing something despite obstacles; a combination of persistence and resilience.
Curiosity	Taking an interest in experience for its own sake; finding things fascinating
Integrity	Speaking the truth and presenting oneself sincerely and genuinely
Gratitude	Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen

(Peterson and Seligman, 2004)

These qualities, attitudes and habits will be embedded within systems and practice and are driven through our cornerstones to ensure that students develop the human capital needed for success.

Co-Curricular Principles

The key belief of Laurus is that the all-round educational attainment of individual students is substantially promoted by their participation in a whole range of activities, not just classroom based academic ones. Inspiring students through these activities will enable them to become better motivated, as well as being more respected by their peers.

Emphasis is placed on students working beyond the curriculum. The super curriculum will enable students to be clear on what academic work beyond the classroom looks like and how they can be supported in it.

Training in the use of voice, and performing arts generally, will inspire confidence and enhance the presentation skills of the students. Other extra-curricular activities, together with regular sport and exercise, and a sense of competitive spirit, will increase personal well-being, health and concentration levels. The Trust will also promote team building, leadership, and a passion to perform to the best of one's ability in all disciplines. These higher levels of individual betterment will be achieved across all ability levels through a wide scope of activities. Leadership is a skill to be learned and cultivated. Students will learn about the importance of success, and how to cope with setbacks, not as failure but as a springboard to better achievement. There will be a focus on developing presentation skills and self-confidence in general. Inspiring students to broaden their horizons and believe that 'anything is possible', is absolutely key to post-education success.

Electives

Enrichment opportunities will be embedded in the academic curriculum and also offered as part of an electives programme. Enrichment activities will be a key factor in contributing to the delivery of our vision.