CURRICULUM AND PATHWAYS POLICY

2026/2027

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Introduction and Context

Unified Academy provides education for students aged 9–16 with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. All students have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and many present with additional needs linked to literacy and numeracy delay, emotional dysregulation, communication difficulties, sensory regulation needs, disrupted education and poor attendance.
The academy recognises that the cohort is not academically or developmentally homogenous. A highly personalised, flexible and adaptive curriculum is therefore essential to secure meaningful outcomes for every student.
This policy sets out the intent, implementation and impact of the curriculum, including the academy's pathways model, and establishes expectations for teaching, learning, assessment, personal development, preparation for adulthood and quality assurance.

Vision, Values and Curriculum Purpose

'Supporting each other, achieving together.'

At Unified Academy, we believe every student has unique strengths, needs and aspirations. Our curriculum is designed to be ambitious, inclusive and purposeful, enabling students to achieve academically, socially and emotionally while preparing for adulthood, employment, further education and independent living.

At Unified Academy we are unified in our values to be:

- We are curious to experience and discover the world around us
- We are respectful of ourselves, each other, and our community
- We are compassionate of the needs and feelings of others
- We are inspired to achieve our full potential and see new possibilities
- We are empowered to make positive choices so that we can contribute to our community

Curriculum Intent

The curriculum at Unified Academy is ambitious, coherently planned and carefully sequenced to ensure that all students, regardless of starting point, acquire the knowledge, skills and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. Leaders have designed the curriculum to address significant gaps in prior learning while maintaining high expectations for all students.
The curriculum is designed to:

- deliver a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum across academic, vocational and personal development domains;
- improve literacy, oracy and numeracy so that students can access learning more

confidently and independently;
- support progress towards EHCP outcomes through adaptive, relational and therapeutically informed practice;
- promote engagement, attendance, self-regulation, resilience and independence;
- secure meaningful accreditation and recognised qualifications, particularly in English and mathematics;
- prepare students effectively for their next stage in education, employment or training.

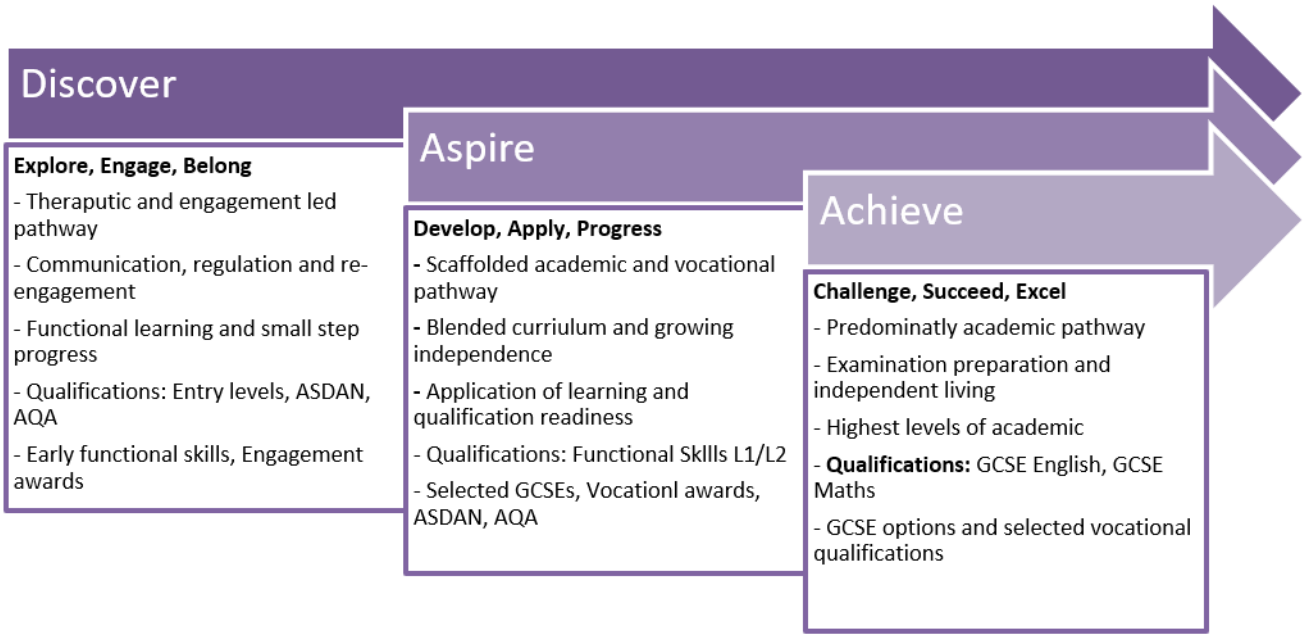
Whole-School Curriculum Drivers

The curriculum is underpinned by four whole-school drivers which shape planning, teaching, intervention and assessment across all pathways:

- **Reading** – developing fluency, comprehension, subject literacy and a love of reading.
- **Remembering** – strengthening retrieval, repetition and long-term retention of knowledge.
- **Resilience** – building confidence, emotional regulation, perseverance and self-belief.
- **Oracy** – developing speaking, listening, communication and self-expression across the curriculum.

Curriculum Structure: Unified Academy Pathways Model

The academy operates a graduated three-pathway (three-flight) curriculum model. This reflects the complexity of student need and avoids a one-size-fits-all approach. Pathways are ambitious in different ways, maintaining clear progression routes while matching curriculum content, pedagogy and pace to individual readiness, engagement and need.



Pathway Principles

- Pathway placement is informed by baseline assessment, EHCP outcomes, literacy and numeracy profiles, attendance, engagement, preparation for adulthood outcomes and parental/carer views.
- Placement is reviewed regularly so that students can move between pathways where this is in their best interests.

- All pathways maintain ambition and lead to meaningful accreditation, improved basic skills, personal development and next-step readiness.
- The pathways model determines not only qualification routes but also curriculum experience, teaching approach, sequencing and level of support.

Pathway Overview

Pathway	Descriptor	Curriculum focus	Typical qualifications / accreditation	Indicative characteristics
Discover	Explore, Engage, Belong	Therapeutic and engagement-led provision focused on communication, regulation, functional learning and carefully staged re-engagement with formal learning.	Entry Level qualifications; ASDAN/AQA awards; vocational engagement awards; early Functional Skills progression.	Students requiring intensive support with attendance, regulation, confidence, communication and readiness for formal accreditation.
Aspire	Develop, Apply, Progress	Scaffolded academic and vocational provision with increasing independence, practical learning and clear progression to recognised qualifications.	Functional Skills Level 1 and Level 2; selected GCSEs; vocational qualifications; ASDAN/AQA awards.	Students who benefit from a blended curriculum and smaller-step progression towards qualification success.
Achieve	Challenge, Succeed, Excel	Predominantly academic pathway focused on examination preparation, subject depth, independent learning and strong qualification outcomes.	GCSE English and Mathematics; GCSE option subjects; selected vocational qualifications.	Students ready to sustain formal study and examination demands with appropriate support.

Curriculum Offer

Unified Academy teaches a broad range of subjects and experiences across Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. The offer remains broad and balanced while becoming increasingly personalised as students progress through the school.

Curriculum area	Subjects / provision
Core	English, Mathematics, Reading
Science	Science, Entry Level Science, GCSE Biology (where appropriate)
Humanities	History, Geography, Citizenship
Creative Arts	Art, Photography, Design and Technology
Vocational Learning	Construction, Mechanics, Home Cooking Skills, Food Preparation and Nutrition, practical qualifications as available
Digital Technologies	ICT / Computing
Physical Development	PE, outdoor learning and enrichment activity
Personal Development	PSHE, RSE, careers education, wellbeing, preparation for adulthood
Enrichment	Educational visits, projects, clubs and community participation

Curriculum Implementation

Teaching and Learning

Teaching at Unified Academy is rooted in strong relationships, clear routines and inclusive practice. Teachers adapt teaching to remove barriers to learning while maintaining high expectations. Learning is sequenced to build knowledge and skills over time and revisited so that students remember more and can do more.

- High expectations, positive relationships and a calm, safe and purposeful climate for learning.
- Explicit modelling, vocabulary instruction, questioning and checks for understanding.
- Adaptive teaching, scaffolding and effective deployment of support staff.
- Retrieval practice, overlearning and opportunities for application and independence.
- Responsive assessment to identify misconceptions and inform next steps.

Therapeutic, Relational and Nurture-Based Practice
The curriculum is delivered through a nurture-based, reflective and restorative approach. Therapeutic support is integrated to remove barriers to learning and improve students' capacity to engage, regulate and make progress.

- Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT)
- Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA)
- CAMHS and wider mental health support
- Canine assisted learning and other relational interventions
- Creative, therapeutic art, music and sensory-based interventions where appropriate

Literacy, Reading and Communication
Reading and communication are central to the curriculum because students' literacy needs can significantly affect access to learning. The academy uses a graduated reading strategy informed by assessment.

- Universal provision: regular reading opportunities, reading assessments and access to appropriately matched texts.
- Targeted provision: structured one-to-one reading intervention for students working below age-related expectations.
- Specialist provision: intensive phonological and decoding support for students with the greatest reading difficulties.
- Oracy and vocabulary are explicitly developed across the curriculum.

Enrichment
At Unified Academy, we offer an enrichment curriculum which sees all students access a variety of extra-curricular activities in the format of bite sized tasters, facilitated by external and internal practitioners. Our students cannot access after-school clubs and activities due to their home settings being spread across a wide geographical area and the need to use individual taxis to get them safely to and from school. With this in mind, we have created a personal development curriculum that enables all students to choose, explore and experience new activities. Sessions are planned to include a broad range of activities focusing on student's cognitive, creative, digital, physical, social and cultural development.

These new experiences enable them to develop skills and knowledge in subjects and activities that would not normally be found on a traditional curriculum and work towards AQA Award units of accreditation.

Personal Development and Preparation for Adulthood
Personal development is central to the curriculum and is explicitly linked to EHCP outcomes and destination planning. Students are supported to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed for successful adult lives.

- PSHE and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) delivered in line with statutory requirements.
- Careers education, employability skills and encounters with the wider world of work.

- Independence, life skills and community participation.
- Health, wellbeing, resilience and safe decision-making.
- Fundamental British Values, SMSC and responsible citizenship.

Alternative Learning Provision (ALP)
Where students are unable to access the full in-school curriculum, alternative provision may be commissioned to provide a purposeful and appropriate programme of learning. Such provision is quality assured and designed to maintain academic focus, support engagement and improve attendance, motivation and aspiration.

Assessment, Progress and Accreditation

Assessment at Unified Academy is both formative and summative. It is used to identify starting points, monitor progress, inform planning and intervention, and ensure students follow the most appropriate pathway and accreditation route.

- Baseline assessment on entry and regular review of literacy, numeracy, engagement and readiness for learning.
- Half-termly progress monitoring in relation to curriculum expectations, skills and knowledge.
- Ongoing review of EHCP outcomes, intervention impact and preparation for adulthood targets.
- Qualification pathways that provide clear progression from Entry Level to Functional Skills and GCSE, alongside relevant vocational accreditation.

Leaders monitor the appropriateness of qualification entry to reduce the risk of students being entered for courses that do not match their readiness, and to ensure that students leave with meaningful and recognised outcomes, especially in English and mathematics.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring

Leaders and governors monitor the quality of education through a range of quality assurance activities. Monitoring is developmental and focused on improving consistency, curriculum implementation and student outcomes.

- lesson observations and learning walks;
- planning reviews and evaluation of curriculum sequencing;
- book and work scrutiny;
- assessment reviews and outcome analysis;
- student voice and parental/carer feedback;
- environment audits and pathway reviews.

Planning Expectations
Planning should reflect curriculum intent, progression, pathway outcomes, literacy development, assessment information and preparation for future destinations.

Book Scrutiny Framework
Book scrutinies evaluate curriculum coverage, progression, vocabulary development, presentation, feedback, student response, adaptive teaching, evidence of progress and pathway alignment.

Lesson Observation Framework
Observations evaluate curriculum alignment, instructional delivery, engagement, classroom climate, assessment for learning, inclusion and pathway-appropriate challenge.

Quality First Teaching Framework
The framework evaluates:

1. Learning intentions and success criteria.

2. Engagement and lesson structure.
3. Teacher input and modelling.
4. Questioning and dialogue.
5. Adaptive teaching and feedback.
6. Safe and aspirational learning environments.
7. Curriculum coherence.
8. Effective use of technology.
9. Deployment of support staff.
10. Pathway alignment and progression.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Principal has overall responsibility for the strategic leadership and implementation of this policy.
- Senior and middle leaders are responsible for curriculum design, quality assurance, assessment oversight and pathway effectiveness.
- Teachers are responsible for delivering high-quality teaching, planning coherent learning and using assessment to secure progress.
- Support staff contribute to learning, inclusion, regulation and the effective implementation of adaptive strategies.
- Governors provide oversight, challenge and support in relation to curriculum quality, outcomes and statutory compliance.

Equality, Inclusion and Safeguarding

Unified Academy is committed to equality of opportunity and ensuring that all students, regardless of need, background or starting point, can access an ambitious curriculum and achieve positive outcomes. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and is embedded throughout the curriculum, school culture and personal development programme.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required by changes in legislation, statutory guidance or the needs of the academy cohort. The effectiveness of the pathways model will be reviewed through curriculum monitoring, accreditation outcomes and destination data.