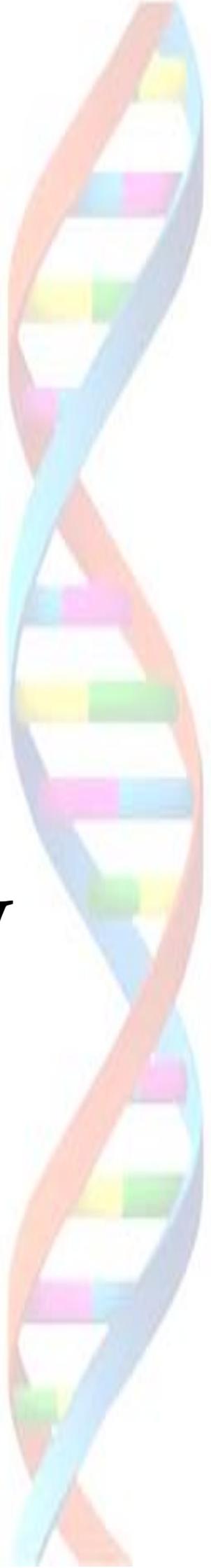


The DNA of



ARK ACADEMY

**Ark Academy
Secondary**



ARK ACADEMY MISSION STATEMENT

Ark Academy has at its core the pursuit of highest standards possible in education. We believe in high aspirations, high motivation and high achievement for all. Through our extended curriculum and community life we seek to meet the needs of the whole person. Civitas – Citizenship – is at our core. We will build a community of civic pride and social justice in which all members are equally valued. We are committed to the service of young people and to helping them play their full part in society.

In light of this we aim to:

- *Provide every student with the knowledge, skills, self-belief and motivation to be successful in their learning and lives*
- *Welcome, value and respect all who come to the school*
- *Build a community based on justice and a sense of personal responsibility*
- *Provide opportunities for all to experience CIVITAS whilst developing a spirit of tolerance and understanding for all cultures, traditions and faiths*
- *Promote dialogue and co-operation with the wider community*

Our Driving Principles are:

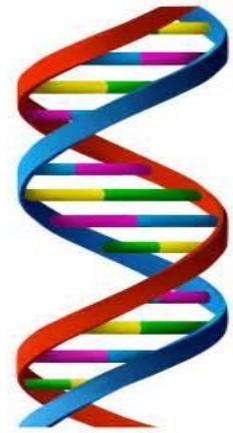
- ***Excellence***
- ***Citizenship***
- ***Participation***
- ***Persistence***

Our goal

Our goal is that all students should be able to access higher education and participate fully in our democratic society.

The DNA of Ark Academy

In Ark Academy we strive to do the best we can by our students and staff who work so hard in support our youngsters. We believe our ethos, its 'feel' is generated by the genuine 'buy in' for our core values. This has not happened by accident or as a purely top down model but through dialogue. Our values are also underpinned by our habits and 'the way we do things around here'. We believe that in Ark Academy the following characteristics are tangible and central to achieving our mission.



A strong ethos based on 'Civitas'



Students will develop the characteristics that support their academic achievement and will become thoughtful citizens who make good choices in their lives.

There is a compelling and inclusive moral purpose which drives the school forward and is represented by and reflected throughout the school by our motto and core value '**Civitas**'. It is important that all members of our community recognise the meaning and spirit of Civitas and that we strive to reflect it in our daily lives. Staff surveys have identified that we have a clear vision shared by all. All our students know and believe, that Civitas is about being a better human being. We support Civitas in a variety of ways but significantly through our whole system of pastoral care and by the way we greet each other, talk to one another and take on responsibilities. The highest award we can give is the **Civitas badge** which is worn with pride by the few who attain it annually. Our reward system is based on the 4 core values of:

Civitas, excellence, persistence and participation

These values are evident in our customs, rituals, symbols, stories, language and the visual environment. We know character cannot be developed by taught lessons alone, but they are reinforced by our PSHE programme, assemblies and tutor time. Our considerable efforts for charities through the house system and other events also supports our concepts of giving, altruism and empathy. There are many opportunities for students in Ark to demonstrate these qualities and many others but **we always come back to the all embracing word 'Civitas'**.

We are **compassionately ruthless** in ensuring that all students know and understand why we need to be Civitas but also how we organise ourselves so that Ark Academy is a civil society. This requires consistency. We know you cannot have a shared vision, culture or ethos without consistent implementation of the basic ground rules. Simply,

Consistency is king.

We support one another and our students by the use of **consistent routines**. These are implemented by everyone ensuring that all students know the standards required of them for a calm school with an excellent climate for learning. All our routines are codified and we practice them with our students until we achieve 100% compliance on these basics of school life.

We know the why of our vision and values and the routines that support 'how we do things around here.' We never stop practising and trying to improve "the how."

Teaching and Learning is the main thing

The promotion of high quality learning is at the heart of our endeavours.

We have a clear view of pedagogy which promotes expert teaching. As a staff we have collectively considered what constitutes effective learning. We regularly share the most effective practices and teaching techniques that maximise achievement.

Our 4 part lesson is crucial for maximising progress. Through our lessons we **build student understanding** and work to ensure that knowledge is committed to the long term memory.

Formal assessments three times a year cumulatively test students' learning over the year. Revision is built into the curriculum to support our students' progressive understanding of how to learn independently. We place great emphasis on our **review week** which happens after each formal assessment. This period of time allows us to re-teach key aspects and students to fix areas of misconception before the grade for the assessment is reported to them. This is a key component of our **feedback strategy**. Alongside high stakes testing, all departments implement a wide variety of assessments or quizzes designed to test and reinforce key learning formative and feedback into teaching.

We ensure **consistency of provision** and access to learning through our whole school commitment to **co-planning**. This is a key feature of how we collectively operate as a school. Every department has time set aside weekly to ensure that not only is there clarity about the departments' medium term plans, but also all lessons within a topic are consistently delivered across the cohort. All staff adapt these plans to meet the learning needs of the set they are teaching, but the key learning remains the same.

We plan our curriculum backwards from 'A' level in each subject area ensuring there is clear progression through the age related curriculum. The concepts, knowledge and skills necessary to be successful are embedded at each stage so that students can successfully access the curriculum as it becomes progressively more challenging.

We deliver our medium term plans through **Fertile Questions**. These are planning devices for knitting together a sequence of lessons. The questions aim to be thought provoking, challenging and holistic. We recognise that as learners we like 'the whole game' and 'the big picture' first. We know this approach engages pupils and helps them see the links between concepts and knowledge. Fertile questions are a unique part of our DNA.

Teaching is a craft that we can always improve

We are always learning as teachers and we put professional development at the heart of what we do. We develop best through observation, feedback and deliberate practice.

We invest heavily in our provision for professional development. We know that this is key to the development of our students and to us as educators. We also recognise that all teachers need their subject knowledge refreshing and developing. We want all staff to feel valued, invested in and developed. We let our students know that we are also learners and that we too learn from our mistakes.

We develop our knowledge and skills in Ark in a variety of ways that link together to provide a wide range of opportunities to learn both on the job and from experts. Our teaching practice is developed through **weekly mentoring** (new staff), **training** for all, our weekly **co-planning** meetings, through observation and where possible **through co-teaching** to support staff new to teaching. Our mentoring and training is based on deliberate practice and feedback, so we know what has worked and what needs further work. Most of our in house training is delivered by a wide variety of staff from NQTs to senior leaders. Evaluation of our training is of a very high order and always feedback into our practice.

We are committed to research and reviewing educational thinking as a learning community we also share articles and best practice through our weekly bulletin and blog.

As part of Ark Schools we have regular opportunities to share practice and collaborate within our subject areas. We benefit from being one of 15 secondary schools. We are also a member of *The Prince's Teaching Institute* which supports the development of subject knowledge.

We learn best when we learn together

We are a community of learners. It is in our DNA to talk, observe, plan and reflect together about our practice.

Through our talk, training and observation we have developed a shared understanding and a common language that ensures knowledge and skills are transferred efficiently. We know there are key conditions needed to create this community of learners:- trust, risk-taking, collaboration, co-construction, common goals and shared values. We aim not to be defensive and to respond openly to questions and new ideas. We all have something to learn from one another.

Ark Academy learns its way forward, building in time for collective enquiry, reviewing evidence and continually striving for improvement. We evaluate our learning at key points (The Evaluation of Teaching and Learning or ETAL). This is not a document but a process that supports our understanding of student progress and attainment through analysis. The key purpose is to discuss and implement strategies for improvement.

None of the above is relevant if we do not impact on the learning and lives of our students. We believe our students' enjoyment of learning is evident from their interest, concentration, enthusiasm and progress across a range of subjects and experiences.