ALMA EDUCATION

Curriculum Policy

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Statement of Intent

Alma Education recognises the importance of offering a broad and balanced curriculum, underpinned by Alma's shared approach to learning. Alma provides 1:1 and small group provision for learners aged 5 to 18 who are currently unable to access mainstream education. This policy sets out how Alma plans and delivers its curriculum, what it teaches and why, and how it tracks and evidences progress.

Most learners who come to Alma have experienced significant disruption to their education. They arrive with gaps in knowledge that have built up over months or years of missed or fragmented schooling, and many have lost confidence in themselves as learners. This policy describes how Alma plans provision that takes those starting points seriously and works towards a clearly defined next step for each learner.

Through this policy, Alma aims to put learners at the centre of every curriculum decision, offer a curriculum that is genuinely personalised, prepare learners for the next stage of their education and for life, and involve learners, families and commissioning bodies in curriculum planning.

Legislation and Statutory Guidance
Education Act 1996
Equality Act 2010
SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 Years (Jan 2015)
The National Curriculum in England (DfE)
Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)
Non-School AP Voluntary National Standards (Aug 2025)

1. Legal Framework and Related Policies

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the legislation and guidance listed in the table above.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following Alma policies:

- Student Induction Policy
- Assessment Policy
- SEND Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

2. Curriculum Aims and Intent

Alma's curriculum consists of the sessions designed to promote the intellectual, personal, social and emotional development of every learner. It is built on English, mathematics and science, with PSHE and digital skills embedded throughout, and is shaped around each learner's actual starting point, identified through baseline assessment at the start of provision.

Through this policy, Alma aims to:

- Put learners at the centre of all curriculum decisions.
- Offer a curriculum that is genuinely personalised, not simply differentiated from a fixed starting point.
- Prepare learners for the next stage of their education and for life.
- Be committed to excellence and continuous improvement.
- Provide learning that meets each learner's actual needs.
- Nurture the talents of every learner and celebrate success.
- Work closely with commissioning bodies to ease transition, in either direction.
- Involve learners and families in curriculum planning.

The overall aims of the curriculum are to:

- Enable every learner to be a successful learner, whatever their starting point.
- Enable learners to understand the skills and attributes needed to learn successfully.
- Enable learners who are behind age-related expectations to close the gap over time.
- Enable learners to develop and use high-quality functional skills, including key literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- Enable learners to develop their own interests and a positive attitude towards learning, so that sessions are something they want to attend and a solid basis for lifelong learning is built.
- Help learners understand their changing world, and the fundamental British values that enable them to be positive citizens.
- Enable learners to have respect for themselves and others, and to work cooperatively with those around them.

3. Our Learners

Learners access Alma's provision for a range of reasons, including:

- Anxiety, school avoidance or SEMH needs that have made full-time attendance at a mainstream setting unworkable.
- A break in their school placement, or a period without a confirmed school place.
- Unmet SEND needs, including autism, ADHD, dyslexia and complex learning profiles.
- Trauma, disrupted home circumstances, or extended periods of absence from education.
- Medical needs that prevent attendance at a mainstream setting.

Most learners hold an EHC plan or are undergoing assessment. Many have experienced more than one placement that has not worked out. Alma's curriculum is planned around each learner's actual starting point, identified through baseline assessment at the start of provision.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Advisory Board

The Advisory Board, in its advisory role, will:

- Approving and monitoring the content of this policy.
- Seeking assurance that the curriculum is inclusive and accessible to every learner.
- Seeking assurance that proper provision is made for learners with different abilities and needs, including learners with SEND.
- Contributing towards decisions made about Alma's curriculum approach.

The Director of Education

The Director of Education is responsible for:

- Overseeing the curriculum approach, in collaboration with learning mentors.
- Ensuring the curriculum is inclusive and accessible to every learner.
- Reviewing planning at supervision and check-ins, and ensuring consistency between each learner's ILP and the learning actually taking place.
- Keeping up to date with any relevant statutory updates and taking action where required.
- Ensuring difficulties in curriculum delivery are addressed and mitigated as soon as possible.
- Updating and maintaining this policy.

Learning mentors

Learning mentors are responsible for:

- Implementing this policy consistently in their practice.
- Planning sessions that reflect the learner's ILP and are delivered in engaging, personalised ways.
- Creating and reviewing session plans in collaboration with the Director of Education.
- Ensuring the curriculum is accessible to the individual learner they are working with, adapting materials and approach as needed.
- Celebrating every learner's achievements.
- Reporting the progress of learners with SEND, and raising any difficulties identified, with the Director of Education.
- Monitoring the progress of the learner they work with and reporting on this at supervision.
- Working to close the gap between a learner's current attainment and age-related expectations.

5. Curriculum Structure

Alma's provision is part-time. As a non-school alternative provision, Alma operates within the limits set by the Non-School AP Voluntary National Standards: sessions complement, rather than replace, the commissioning body's responsibility for the learner's overall education. The commissioning body retains accountability for the learner's full educational programme.

Subject area	Priority	Qualification pathway
English	Core, priority focus	Functional Skills Entry Level to Level 2 / GCSE English Language and Literature
Mathematics	Core, priority focus	Functional Skills Entry Level to Level 2 / GCSE Mathematics
Science	Core, priority focus	Entry Level Certificate / GCSE Combined Science
PSHE	Embedded strand	Not accredited separately, woven across all subjects
Digital Skills	Embedded strand	Not accredited separately, woven across all subjects

The appropriate qualification pathway is agreed with the family and commissioning body as part of the ILP. For most learners this will be Functional Skills; where the commissioning body is working towards GCSE, Alma's teaching is aligned to support that.

6. How We Plan and Teach

Sessions at Alma are planned around each learner's interests. This is a practical decision, not a soft one. Learners who have stopped attending school rarely re-engage with content that bears no relation to their lives. Working from what a learner already knows and cares about gives new content a context that makes it easier to hold on to. A learner interested in music learns about wave physics through sound. A learner who follows football works with statistics and probability. The subject content is the same; the route in is different.

Because provision is part-time, and because most learners arrive with significant gaps, Alma does not attempt to cover a broad curriculum at the expense of depth. English, mathematics and science are the core of every learner's programme. PSHE and digital skills are built into sessions across those subjects rather than taught as separate topics.

Curriculum planning is sequential. Each session is planned in relation to what came before and what comes next. The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) sets the objectives for the term, and session

planning follows it. The Director of Education reviews planning regularly and checks that what is being taught matches what was agreed in the ILP.

7. English

English is Alma's highest curriculum priority. Most learners who join Alma have significant gaps in literacy and a history of difficulty with reading and writing. Closing those gaps has the largest single impact on a learner's prospects, whatever their next step.

For many of Alma's learners, spoken language is a more accessible starting point than written tasks. Sessions in English often begin with discussion or verbal exploration of a text or idea before moving into writing. Oracy is taught directly: speaking clearly, constructing an argument verbally and listening with attention are skills that many learners have not had explicit teaching in, and that translate directly into stronger written work.

Reading

Reading sessions use high-interest texts chosen to match the individual learner, including fiction, non-fiction, journalism, scripts and poetry. Learners have a say in what they read, and the range of text types increases as confidence builds. Key skills covered include:

- Decoding and fluency, including phonics catch-up for learners with gaps or dyslexia-related barriers.
- Inference and comprehension: reading beyond the literal meaning of a text.
- Critical reading: understanding how a writer uses language to achieve an effect.
- Exposure to a range of literary and non-literary forms, including writing from different cultures and time periods.

Writing

Writing is taught with attention to purpose and audience. Learners practise writing to persuade, inform, describe and argue. Grammar and punctuation are taught in context rather than in isolation. Key skills covered include:

- Sentence construction, grammar and punctuation in the context of real writing tasks.
- Planning, drafting and editing as a standard part of the process.
- Writing across a range of forms: narrative, discursive, informative, persuasive.
- Vocabulary development, including subject-specific terminology across other curriculum areas.

Spoken language and oracy

Learners are taught to articulate their thinking, make a case verbally, ask useful questions and engage in discussion. For many learners, this is the area in which progress is fastest and most visible, and it has a direct effect on confidence in written work.

8. Mathematics

Mathematics teaching at Alma starts from number. Most learners have gaps in foundational number knowledge that make progress in other areas difficult. Before moving into algebra, geometry or data, Alma establishes secure understanding of place value, calculation, fractions, percentages and ratio.

Sessions use real-world contexts wherever this supports understanding rather than complicating it. Calculators and digital tools are used appropriately. The focus is on learners understanding why a method works, not just following a procedure.

Focus area	What we prioritise
Number and calculation	Place value, mental strategies, written methods, fractions, decimals, percentages, ratio, the foundations underpinning all other maths
Algebra	Understanding and using formulae, sequences, solving equations, introduced through real-world contexts
Geometry and measure	Shape, space, measurement, area, perimeter, volume, connected to practical and vocational contexts
Data and statistics	Interpreting charts and graphs, averages, probability, developed through topics the learner finds relevant, such as sport, gaming or social data
Problem-solving	Applying mathematical knowledge to unfamiliar situations; reasoning and explaining thinking, not just calculating

9. Science

Science sessions at Alma start from something the learner has encountered, observed or is curious about, then build outward into content and explanation. This approach tends to sustain engagement more reliably than working through content in a fixed sequence. Working scientifically, forming a question, considering evidence, drawing a conclusion, is taught alongside subject content throughout.

Biology

Topics include:

- The human body: how major systems work (nervous, digestive, circulatory, respiratory).

- Health and lifestyle: nutrition, exercise, sleep and mental health, the science behind everyday choices.
- Genetics and inheritance.
- Ecosystems and the environment: living systems and human impact.

Physics

Topics include:

- Forces and motion: why things move, stop, accelerate.
- Energy: forms, transfer and conservation, connected to technology and the environment.
- Electricity and circuits: how devices work, through practical investigation.
- Waves: sound and light, with connections to music, photography and communication technology.

Chemistry

Topics include:

- States of matter and particle theory.
- Chemical and physical changes in everyday contexts.
- Elements, compounds and mixtures.
- Earth and atmosphere: climate, weather and environmental change.

Working scientifically

Across all science topics, learners practise the skills of scientific enquiry: forming a question, planning an investigation, gathering and evaluating evidence, and drawing conclusions. These skills are assessed alongside content knowledge.

10. PSHE and Digital Skills

PSHE and digital skills are taught within core subject sessions rather than as separate timetabled topics. This is a deliberate decision: standalone PSHE lessons work well in settings with a full timetable and a consistent group; for learners working 1:1 in part-time provision, embedding these areas in real subject contexts tends to be more effective.

PSHE

PSHE content is addressed across five areas:

- Health and wellbeing: physical and mental health, sleep, nutrition, managing emotions, and recognising when to seek support.
- Relationships: healthy and unhealthy relationships, boundaries, consent, online relationships, family and friendship.
- Identity: self-knowledge, strengths, neurodiversity and difference.

- Careers and life skills: financial literacy, decision-making, and understanding the world of work and available pathways.
- Citizenship: rights and responsibilities, current events, the justice system and community.

These topics arise naturally in many sessions: a science session on health, a maths session using personal finance, an English text that deals with relationships or identity. Where a specific PSHE area needs to be addressed directly, the learning mentor raises it with the Director of Education first.

Digital skills

Digital skills are developed across all subject areas. Learners use technology for research, writing and communication. Key areas covered include:

- Finding and evaluating information online: understanding what is reliable, what is not, and why that distinction matters.
- Responsible use of the internet: privacy, data, online behaviour, and the legal and ethical dimensions of digital activity.
- Practical skills: word processing, working with spreadsheets and data, creating presentations, digital communication.
- Safe use of devices and platforms, in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

11. Planning and Personalisation

Every learner at Alma has an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), which is informed by:

- The learner's EHC plan and the outcomes it specifies, where one exists.
- Baseline assessment results in English, mathematics and a wellbeing and barriers-to-learning check, completed within the first two weeks of provision.
- The expectations and qualification pathway of the commissioning body.
- The learner's interests, preferences and aspirations, gathered during induction.
- The learning mentor's observations of how the learner engages, learns and responds.

The ILP sets out the specific learning objectives for the current term, the curriculum content to be covered, the approach and adaptations in place, and the intended next step. It is reviewed at least every term and updated whenever there is a significant change in the learner's needs or circumstances.

Learning mentors plan individual sessions using the ILP as their guide. Session plans are not submitted centrally for every session, but the Director of Education reviews planning at supervision and during regular check-ins. Consistency between the ILP and the learning that is actually taking place is a quality assurance priority.

12. Reporting and Assessment

All reporting and assessment is conducted in line with the Assessment Policy.

Individual learner progress is regularly monitored and reviewed. Progress is recorded and reported back to the Director of Education, the learner and their family, and shared with the commissioning body at each ILP review point. Evaluations and assessments feed back into future or adjusted curriculum plans.

Additional consideration is given to learners who need it, for example learners with SEND, learners who are unwell, or learners whose circumstances affect their engagement on a given day.

13. Tracking Progress and Addressing Gaps

Progress at Alma is tracked against each learner's individual starting point. Where national age-related expectations are relevant, for example where a learner is working towards GCSE, these are referenced, but progress is always measured from where the learner actually started, not from where they might have been expected to be.

Alma tracks progress as follows:

- The learning mentor records observations, evidence of work and progress notes after each session.
- Baseline assessments at the start of provision create a documented starting point for English, mathematics and wellbeing.
- Progress is reviewed at each ILP review point. The Director of Education and learning mentor assess how far the learner has moved from their baseline, and whether the curriculum plan needs to change.
- Progress information is shared with the family and commissioning body at the ILP review point, and at any other time requested.

When a learning mentor identifies a gap or a recurring misconception, whether through observation, a task the learner cannot complete, or a question that reveals a missing foundation, they note it in the session record and raise it at the next supervision or check-in with the Director of Education. The session plan is adjusted to address it before moving on. Alma does not progress through content where the foundation is not yet secure.

14. Equal Opportunities

Alma takes account of its duties under equal opportunities legislation covering race, disability, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment. When planning and delivering the curriculum, Alma has due regard to equality and diversity at all times, and takes care to ensure that every learner has access to curriculum content.

Alma's curriculum celebrates diversity, and the Director of Education has a responsibility to ensure the curriculum does not discriminate against any of the above characteristics.

15. Supporting Learners with SEND

Alma's curriculum is designed to provide access and opportunity for every learner it works with.

Where required, learners with SEND receive the additional support they need, in line with the SEND Policy. This may include:

- Additional support built into the ILP, both academic and for personal development.
- Adjustments to ensure learners with SEND are not disadvantaged in any way.
- The learning mentor monitoring progress closely and reporting to the Director of Education.
- A close working relationship between the learning mentor and Director of Education, to help break down any barriers a learner with SEND has to achieving.

16. Transition

The Director of Education maintains regular communication with the commissioning body about each learner's progress and readiness for transition. Curriculum planning at Alma is aligned to the expectations of the destination setting as closely as possible, so that a learner returning to a mainstream school or moving to a specialist provision is not starting from scratch in a different system.

As a learner approaches transition, sessions increasingly focus on the specific content, skills and vocabulary they will encounter in their next setting, alongside practical study and organisational skills. Where a learner has an EHC plan, transition planning is coordinated with the annual review process.

Alma works towards the destination and pathway agreed with the commissioning body, and keeps the commissioning body updated on progress towards it throughout the placement.

17. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Director of Education and the Advisory Board, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or statutory guidance. Any necessary amendments will be communicated to all staff. This policy was approved by Melanie Steel, Director of Education, in August 2026 and is due for review in August 2027.