

## Curriculum Policy

The Jam Academy is committed to providing students with a comprehensive and integrated educational experience. We strive for the curriculum to be academically rigorous, while delivering it in a stress free environment for students who struggle in large state-school surroundings. We are passionate for students to see the connections between different subject areas and appreciate the need for skills that underpin life and support lifelong learning in their future careers. At the core of the curriculum are the academy's values of respect, trust, truth and empathy for others.

The curriculum enables students to develop their intellectual curiosity whilst becoming independent lifelong learners with the skills to respond positively to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. The curriculum framework affords greater opportunities for creativity, personalisation and independent learning.

The Jam Academy Curriculum Policy enshrines the academic aims of the school:

- To enable students to realise their full potential.
- To encourage students to measure achievement by their own potential rather than primarily by the achievements of others.
- To establish good working habits leading to increasing autonomy in learning.
- To prepare students for adult life where they are happy, fulfilled and kind to others.

The Jam Academy's curriculum is split into two main age bands:

- School years 6 – 11 (which is a mixed class of up to 12 students)
- Sixth Form (which includes up to 18 students learning specialist performance and production arts subjects).

Although all full-time students attend The Jam Academy (which is registered with the Department for Education), we often refer to the younger age band as the Jam Creative School, for reasons explained below.

## The Jam Creative School (School Years 6 – 11, Key Stages 3 & 4)

Key Stage 3 and 4 students at The Jam Academy are often referred to as the Jam Creative School. The reason for this is to ensure that parents and students understand there is a clear distinction between the broad curriculum approach for Key Stage 3 & 4 and the specialist approach of our Sixth Form. Our Year 6s – 11s are NOT at a performing arts school! They are at a small secondary school that covers normal school subjects in a more creative and holistic way, that appeals to some students who struggle at large state schools in the area. We are restricted to one mixed aged class of 12 students, which is often described as being home-schooling but in a full-time group. In fact, many of our students are children who have been home-schooled, others are school refusers or have low attendance at previous schools due to a variety of reasons including mental health issues such as anxiety or the victims of perpetual bullying.

The Jam Creative School curriculum can be divided into four different types of sessions:

### 1. **Project Work**

These classes cover the science and humanities curriculum through a holistic approach. Some sessions are theory based - taught from the front as you would find in many schools. However, there is always an over-arching theme or product to design/create which helps students connect the theory to the real world.

- ▶ Science - Teaching the three sciences in isolated lessons by different teachers in different rooms spread over a two-week timetable can often be confusing and disorientating for some students. Our approach clearly embraces the cross-over between the three sciences as well as the cross-over into ICT, Design Technology, Food Tech, Healthy Living, Geography, Current Affairs, Politics.
- ▶ History - Projects may look at specific events or historical periods for a week of lessons, but we see history in everything! Whether it helps understand the context to theories in science, how these have developed and changed, or whether it is understanding the religious implications for conflict and resolution. Our students understand that the need to study history is to learn from it, to ensure our communities (whether local or international) can use history to ensure we make the right decisions today.
- ▶ Religious Education - Although the Religious Education curriculum is covered with project work specifically aimed at learning about different religions and beliefs, it is focused on being tolerant to others. At the Jam Creative School there isn't a week that goes by without discussions of religion and how this has shaped what we are learning, how it has shaped history and appreciating how this may influence others peoples views, always with a focus on respect.
- ▶ The Broader World - Howard Gardner encourages that 'Intelligence is the ability to find and solve problems and create products of value in one's own culture.' Hence, at the Jam Creative School we encourage our students to design and create something that is useful in their local or global communities. This gives a relevance to our students for the skills and knowledge that the curriculum and examinations require for them to succeed to the next level of education or training. Our projects teach our students across sciences, humanities, religious education, PSHCE, ICT, Design Tech, Food Tech, Healthy Living, Current Affairs and Politics. Please see the appendix at the end of this document for past examples of these projects.

## 2. Skills Sessions

Experience supports our theory that when we treat Maths as simply a skill, alongside playing a musical instrument or being able to draw, students see the sessions more positively. The skills to use maths are then something they simply need to master, often by going over and over again with the same exercises like a dancer would to learn to turn correctly and 'spot'. Our teachers and students have a 'Growth Mind Set' - everyone can develop their skills to be a mathematician, in the same way as they can build muscle strength through sports. They also understand how the adolescent brain is having a complete remodel, which will continue into their early 20s. Connections in the brain, as they grow and change through the teenage years, need as much stimulation as possible not a narrow focus. This is why all our students learn to play an instrument alongside having specific spelling and times tables sessions for example. We want our students to develop good habits that will be with them for a life-time. Weekly sessions could include:

- ▶ Maths, Times Tables, English Grammar, Creative Writing, Spellings, Guitar, Understanding Music, Sports, Health & Fitness, Art, Novel Reading/Literature, Soul Food, ICT

## 3. Personal Development

Our students are encouraged to be pro-active in their learning. They are not robots to be programmed by teachers, they are unique individuals who need to explore their own passions as well as developing their basic skills in maths, literacy and science. Personal development time includes personal reading time, current affairs, personal project time and study time where their extension work is completed before they leave for the day, allowing for them to spend their evenings exploring what makes them unique and importantly to us - happy! A session which is crucial for students' personal development and PSHCE curriculum is 'Soul Food'. This is listed under our skills sessions, for the good reason that it provides students with the skills, techniques and knowledge to be able to be kind to others AND themselves. Our visiting counsellor Lucy Cavendish can be booked by any student and attending a session is regarded as just as normal as attending a private singing lesson. Mental Health at the academy is a positive part of the curriculum and students' development.

## 4. Jam Classes

The Jam Creative School is not a performing arts school! However it is connected to a professional theatre company with a team of specialist professional staff. All students attend our Saturday Theatre School called JammEd. This is where students get to participate in activities as they would in any school for drama, music and dance. This is also an opportunity for our students to mix with another 80 students of their own age from over 25 other schools, giving them the opportunity to make friends with like minded people and grow in confidence in a wider community.

Jam Creative School students can attend after school classes provided by Professional theatre Company Jam Theatre. These include:

- ▶ Dance Classes: Dance Tech, Commercial, Tap, Ballet, Point,
- ▶ Individual singing lessons, piano lessons and vocal ensembles
- ▶ Specialist acting class
- ▶ Music production

## Timetables

All classes/workshops/lessons are timetabled to take place between 9:30am - 3:30pm on weekdays, and 9:30am - 1:00pm on Saturdays. All 'Jam Classes' which are optional in group 4, take place after school between 4:00pm - 9:00pm.

As we are a small school, we enjoy a flexibility in timetabling, where we can regularly change or even collapse the timetable to allow for other activities and opportunities.

## Qualifications – Level 2

Our emphasis for GCSEs is on deeper learning within key subject areas, rather than quantity. We recognise the need for students to experience a wide curriculum, to be informed citizens, but we do not see the need for everything to go through formal examination - unless the student wishes to.

### 1. Core subjects

- ▶ GCSE English Language & Literature - (AQA)
- ▶ GCSE Mathematics (Edexcel/Pearson)
- ▶ GCSE Science (AQA Synergy, double award)

### 2. Additional optional subjects

- ▶ GCSE History (AQA TBC)
- ▶ GCSE Art & Design (AQA)
- ▶ GCSE Music (AQA)
- ▶ BTEC Level 2 Certificate in Performing Arts (Edexcel/Pearson)

### 3. Languages

Languages are encouraged at The Jam Academy, and regular workshops from visiting linguistics teachers take place. The school can enter students into a GCSE exam for any language, but they will need to be pro-active in their learning - using apps, internet and other online resources to learn the language, while we support them in preparing and taking the exam.

## Specialist Sixth Form (School Years 12 – 13, Key Stage 5 & Foundation)

The Jam Academy sixth form is specifically for those students wishing to give themselves the best shot at attending a drama, dance or music school for their Higher Education with a view to being professional performers or to work in the industry behind the scenes. Although our sixth form students are very focused on their specific aims for a career we are also aware of the need for our young people to be prepared for this difficult industry both physically and mentally, and to be adaptable in their skills to maximise every opportunity that may come their way.

Many students join us with specific strengths in acting, dance, singing, music or technical theatre. However in the first year we expect all students to develop skills in all areas of performance and to experience skills behind the scenes. This allows students to discover their true strengths and explore the variety of employment opportunities available in the creative industries.

During the second year, once individual students have a clearer picture of what they wish to do and where their strengths lie, we are able to adjust the units and qualifications to be completed by each student, tailor making their learning to suit them. This is truly a unique aspect of The Jam Academy's approach and allows students the best opportunity for their future and continuation into Higher Education.

Classes, workshops and practical productions are based on the skills, techniques and theory required to enter the creative industries. At The Jam Academy this curriculum is not simply defined by the qualifications and the units/modules they maybe being assessed in. It is defined and continually updated by the industry, what drama, dance and music colleges are looking for and what skills students need when they enter the world of work to have a rich career portfolio and be able to rise to any opportunity.

Areas of study include:

### **1. Dance**

- ▶ Weekly classes: Dance Tech (Jazz & Technique), Tap; Ballet, Pointe (if appropriate), Commercial, Body Conditioning
- ▶ Visiting Workshops: Audition Technique, Specific Styles (Fosse, MTV etc...), Specific Shows (e.g. Motown, West Side Story etc...)

### **2. Acting**

- ▶ Weekly classes: Voice, Acting Technique, Acting Styles (including Improvisation, Devising, Shakespeare, Contemporary Theatre)
- ▶ Visiting Workshops: Audition Preparation & Practice, Specialist Actors & Directors,

### **3. Singing**

- ▶ Weekly classes: Singing Technique, Singing Repertoire, Acting Through Song, Sight Singing, Harmony Singing
- ▶ Visiting workshops: Visiting professional singers

### **4. Theory**

- ▶ Weekly classes: History (covering: Theatre, Musical Theatre, Music), Music Theory, Performing Arts & Music Business

### **5. Theatre Production**

- ▶ Yearly curriculum covers: Stage Management, Rigging, Operation & Lighting Design, Live Sound Design & Operation
- ▶ Optional Projects: Scenic Design & Construction, Costume Design & Wardrobe, Event & Production Management

### **6. Music Production**

- ▶ Sound Recording & Sequencing, Song -Writing

### Qualifications - Level 3

The sixth form at The Jam Academy is a specialist work-based learning environment, offering vocational qualifications which best equip our students for the industry and higher education within the fields of performance and production arts.

The following qualifications are available at The Jam Academy to our full-time students:

- ▶ Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Firsts in Performing Arts (this includes technical theatre)
- ▶ Pearson BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Performing Arts
- ▶ Pearson BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Production Arts
- ▶ Pearson BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Music Technology
- ▶ Functional Skills (Levels 1 & 2) in Maths, English & ICT

Level 1 qualifications are pre-GCSE level

Level 2 qualifications are the equivalent of GCSEs

Level 3 qualifications are the equivalent of A Levels

Currently we have not moved over to the new Level 3 BTECs, this means that there are no external exams.

### Progression

All students have the opportunity to learn and make progress. Students' progression is both enabled and monitored by at least the following opportunities at the school:

- Accurately recording indicators of progress.
- Annual examinations
- Consultations with parents
- Grades and reports
- Guidance in careers, appropriate to age and experience
- Progress testing
- Special educational needs diagnosis and assistance, including ESL
- Tutorial discussion and counselling
- Staff discussions

Staff development and progress are encouraged to promote better teaching and learning at the school through training, appraisal by area curriculum meetings & training as well as through a range of outside courses which staff may attend.