
RSA Academies Vision Document

What does it mean to be an RSA school?

The purpose of the RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) is to unite people and ideas to resolve the challenges of our time. Our aspiration is to empower human creativity in promoting a 21st century enlightenment.

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An RSA Education

An Enlightenment education

The RSA is an Enlightenment organisation, founded in the 18th Century Enlightenment, and dedicated to creating a 21st Century Enlightenment. Central to this mission is the idea of 'people-powered progress', a belief that ordinary citizens – each one of us – can enrich society through ideas and action.

This belief informs everything our schools do. An RSA education is one that nurtures children's curiosity, cultivates their creativity, builds their confidence and strengthens their character, so they can go out into the world and make a positive difference.

A complete and generous education

A great education should be aimed not only at knowledge and skill, but at character and creativity; it should prepare children and young people not only to do well but to do good; it should be concerned not only with the world as it is, but as it could be. It should promote wellbeing and a sense of self-worth. It should enable all children and young people to discover and celebrate the treasures within themselves. That is why we aim to provide a rich and broad education of the head (academics), the hand (creativity) and the heart (ethics), so our students will be able to judge for themselves what is true, what is right and what is beautiful.

An academic education

To enable our students to engage with these big and timeless questions, we seek to equip them with powerful knowledge, introducing them to the best that has been thought, said and done, and teaching them how to appreciate it, interrogate it, apply it and build on it. This starts with the basics – the foundational skills of literacy, oracy and numeracy on which all further learning depends. Building our student's capacity to learn and their metacognitive abilities helps to encourage self-awareness and enquiry. As students become more fluent and confident, so we can begin to enculturate them in the logic and language of the academic disciplines, explaining their differing perspectives on, and contributions to,

the world. For example, we will show them how the methods and mindset of the scientist and the artist differ; how, to establish objective truths, the scientist must make and test falsifiable predictions, understand cause and effect, and respect evidence and logical coherence, while the artist, in pursuit of meaning, needs also to operate in the subjective realm, the realm of the emotional, the sensory, the aesthetic and the spiritual.

A creative education

A creative education of course includes what are often described as the 'creative subjects' – music, design, dance, drama, art, photography and film – where our students get to experience the transcendent power of the performing and visual arts. Just as importantly, it also encompasses the craft and skill of combining aesthetics with utility; the skills of the designer, engineer, cabinet maker, potter, tailor, chef or coder. And it includes the exhilaration of sport and physical exercise, so that healthy bodies can complement healthy and creative minds. But a creative education isn't just about art, design, making and doing. More than anything, a creative education is about cultivating a creative mindset – inquisitive, innovative and inventive; open to new ideas, testing limits, tolerant of risk and unafraid of failure. By nurturing these attitudes, we seek to develop those key skills - problem-solving, team-building and solution-finding - that are most prized in work and life.

An ethical education

An education that doesn't seek to build good character is not an education worth the name. That is why we work to ensure our students are not only capable, confident and creative, but considerate, caring and kind. By prioritising their social and emotional development, we help them look after themselves and each other, so they can develop and maintain strong, supportive relationships. And by exploring questions of equality, personal identity and values, we help them develop their own perspective and follow their own path, to develop the moral courage and

confidence needed to follow their own conscience and to challenge injustice.

A love of learning

As our students progress through our schools, we don't just want them to learn. We want them to develop a love of learning that will last a lifetime. We know this process can't be rushed. Deep learning, real understanding, true appreciation – these things take time. That's why, in an RSA school, we try to find the time to for our students to

delve deeper or digress, to challenge and inquire, to discuss and debate, and, throughout, to pause, consider, evaluate and reflect. Teaching should be a dialogue, not a monologue. We know too that if we are to capture the power of education to enrich, amaze, inspire and question, we need to help our students find and follow their passions. We want them to experience that focus and purpose that are attainable only through hard work in pursuit of mastery and a joyful sense of fulfilment.

2 **An RSA school**

An RSA school is a school with soul. There's an atmosphere, a feeling and a quality, that this is an enlightened place.

An inclusive school

The RSA's decision to sponsor schools was rooted in our commitment to social justice and our unshakeable belief in the power of a great education to help all children and young people flourish and succeed, no matter what problems or disadvantages they face. But we won't achieve this simply by teaching them the core curriculum. We also need to support their personal and social development, helping them become healthy, adaptable, emotionally resilient young adults who can cope with life's inevitable stresses and challenges. Warm, trusting relationships are key to this. Everyone at an RSA school – students and staff alike – should feel respected, valued and supported.

A networked school

Our schools aim to be securely connected to their local communities and to the wider contexts in which they operate. Their commitment to collaboration is key to building partnerships and harnessing the energies of staff, students, parents and carers and governors in contributing to the common good.

When a student or staff member joins an RSA school, they also join the wider family of RSA schools and of the RSA itself, with its 30,000 members (Fellows) across the UK and beyond.

By connecting our schools to this vast network – by inviting students to RSA House and RSA events, teaching them about the RSA's heritage and history, involving them in RSA projects and introducing them to the RSA's content and ideas – we hope to open our students' minds, broaden their horizons and raise their aspirations, building invaluable social and cultural capital in the process.

The real power of a network lies in its connections to other networks. And so it is with the RSA Fellowship, which is represented within colleges, universities, think tanks and learned societies; employers, professional bodies and unions; arts, cultural and sporting organisations; faith and humanist groups; media and digital technology companies; the civil service and the public services; and countless charities, social enterprises and community organisations. Through these links, we seek provide our students with a range of practical opportunities designed to connect them to, and prepare them for, the world beyond the school gates.

A 'green' school

Young people are increasingly passionate about addressing the challenges of achieving long term environmental sustainability and securing the biodiversity of the Earth. That's why we aim to inspire them with the knowledge and zeal to champion green issues, develop their own environmental interests and have the

confidence to speak truth unto power on these critical matters. Our schools also aim to reduce their own carbon footprints, eliminate waste and to model the sustainable use of resources wherever possible. Giving our students a deep responsibility towards the world as global citizens is at the heart of our moral purpose.

A mission-led school

There are various ways to run a school. A school can focus on education's proxy goals (performance targets, inspections and league tables) or it can focus on education's broader goals (individual fulfilment and societal progress). In the first type of school, all the talk is about metrics. In the second, it is about 'mission' – its purpose, its values and its vision. Of course, effective schools integrate the two – mission and performativity – so that their whole culture and values are aligned to give all students the inspiration to discover their talents, fulfil their potential and become confident, well-rounded young adults and citizens.

An RSA school should be unequivocally mission-led, with the mission being to provide a complete and generous education, so all our students can find their passion and purpose in life and make a positive difference in society, as well as achieve individual success, whether in academic, cultural or sporting endeavours.

Why is our 'mission' so central to what our schools do? Because, as an expression of shared values, that mission is what gives our schools their identity, our teachers their motivation and our students their sense of belonging. Because, as an expression of shared aims, that mission provides us with a constant point on the horizon to aim for – that prevents us being blown off course by external forces and pressures. And because, as an articulation of our educational philosophy and approach, that mission provides us with a set of design principles that shapes everything we do – our schools' culture and

curriculum, protocols and practices, rituals and routines.

Our schools are therefore committed to offering a broad and balanced curriculum, vibrant learning environments and a range of extra-curricular activities, so that students can discover for themselves the riches within their own heads, hands and hearts. An RSA school will invest time and energy into our distinctive educational themes or "Commitments". The first of these relates to Arts, Culture and Creativity. We want all our students to enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum that inspires their passions and brings out their unique aptitudes and abilities. There will be a commitment to creativity across the whole curriculum. The second relates to exploring the World beyond School, because we want our students to be well prepared for future success as life-long learners and in the workplace. And the third Commitment relates to improving Wellbeing and Mental Health, because we recognise the pressures that children and young people face, both at school and as they grow up in our complex interconnected world.

We also want our schools to be places where teachers enjoy professional autonomy, encourage creativity within the classroom and are empowered to innovate. RSA schools will be places where all staff are encouraged to express their own passion and vocation to help young people. Innovation and professional development will be led by research-based practice. All staff – teachers, support staff, administrators, lunch supervisors and cleaners - will feel valued members of the school community and their contributions will be celebrated.

An ethical concern for others, an awareness of global context and a commitment to nurture future leaders who can navigate the increasing complexity of our world with good humour and common sense will be central priorities of our ethos. Our mission is what makes each of our schools an 'RSA school'.