

Ballyclare Secondary School



Curriculum Policy

“Every child deserves a rewarding educational experience.”

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Contents

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Page</i> |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| <i>Ethos</i> | <i>3</i> |
| <i>Rationale</i> | <i>3</i> |
| <i>Aims</i> | <i>3</i> |
| <i>Progress and Outcomes</i> | <i>3</i> |
| <i>Homework</i> | <i>3</i> |
| <i>Statutory Requirements</i> | <i>4</i> |
| <i>Key Stage 3</i> | <i>4</i> |
| <i>Key Stage 4</i> | <i>5</i> |
| <i>Key Stage 5</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>Oversubscription</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>Sixth Form Enrichment</i> | <i>8</i> |
| <i>Careers</i> | <i>8</i> |
| <i>Area Learning Community</i> | <i>9</i> |

Ethos

Ballyclare Secondary School provides a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment that promotes equality of opportunity for all pupils.

Rationale:

The core aim of our school is that “every child should have a rewarding educational experience” and our top priority is to provide a caring and stimulating environment in which each pupil can strive to reach their potential. Our aim is to cater for the whole person, enabling each pupil to develop mentally, spiritually and physically. All teachers are subject specialists and use a wide range of teaching strategies to provide the best possible opportunities for their students.

The Vice Principal for Curriculum will have responsibility for the strategic development and management of the curriculum including:

- The on-going review, evaluation and implementation of the school’s curriculum at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5.
- Overall responsibility for the curricular provision for all pupils.
- Leading curriculum review and initiating curriculum development and policy in line with current theory and legislation.

Aims:

At Ballyclare Secondary School we have high academic standards. We are committed to excellence for all ensuring that children are both happy and successful, achieving their full potential through the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum. Thus, to empower our pupils to achieve the very best of which they are capable, we aim to enable them to develop as individuals and as contributors to society, the economy and the environment through the provision of a broad, balanced and evolving curriculum.

We aim to ensure that all of our pupils:

- will succeed and be the best that they can be, regardless of their background, ability or talent
- will be celebrated in their achievements
- are encouraged to develop skills and values which make them effective learners and inquiring, critical thinkers who are prepared to take the initiative in life.
- will foster habits of intellectual curiosity, reading, thinking, discussing and problem solving.
- Will become independent and lifelong learners

Pupils with identified Special Educational Needs are supported and provided for in school in order to fulfil their potential. In addition, the school assists those who are experiencing difficulties with their studies through our academic and pastoral support mechanisms.

Pupil Progress and Outcomes

Active learning, peer and self-assessment are at the heart of lessons and academic progress is monitored closely. Effective use is made of baseline data on entry to the school which allows personalised targets to be set and monitored. Assessment results are recorded on an electronic tracking system to ensure pupils are progressing and to help target additional learning support.

Homework

Homework is set to give pupils the experience of working on their own and to help parents understand what the pupil is studying at school. Homework should be constructive, support learning and require feedback from the teacher.

Statutory Requirements:

The school offers a range of subjects over and above the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, with particular emphasis on the pastoral dimension of the curriculum. Our Curriculum reflects the Department of Education's Quality Indicators:

“A school culture of achievement, improvement and ambition exists – with clear expectations that all pupils can and will achieve to the very best of their ability.”

Every School A Good School (DENI)

Through the planning and implementation of the curriculum, each pupil is encouraged to reach their potential and nurture their own particular talents and abilities. Teaching is organised through academic areas led by Heads of Department and Subject Co-ordinators. Schemes of work are also designed to ensure a breadth and depth of knowledge, a love for learning and the development of skills and values necessary for life. There is a culture of self-evaluation within all departments which ensures that they remain responsive to changes in education and open to the individual needs of pupils.

The cross-curricular skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT are developed across the curriculum. Opportunities to develop Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities are embedded in the schemes of work of each subject area. Emphasis is placed on transferring, applying and using these skills effectively.

Key Stage 3 (Years 8, 9 and 10)

In Years 8, 9 and 10 (KS3) we deliver the Northern Ireland Curriculum, including: Learning for Life and Work, Cross Curricular Skills including communication, Using Mathematics and ICT. All subjects include Thinking Skills such as Problem Solving, Decision Making, Being Creative, Self -Management and Working with Others in their delivery.

Pupils are allocated to classes that are best suited to their individual needs as indicated by primary school data and by diagnostic testing. Diagnostic tests are designed to assess pupil aptitude not only in literacy and numeracy, but also in their wider skill base.

Key Stage 3 pupils will have the opportunity to transfer between classes based on their educational achievements and needs measured by internal school assessments. Subjects that pupils will study include:

- Art
- Business Studies
- Drama
- English
- French
- Geography
- History
- Home Economics
- ICT
- Learning for Life & Work
- Mathematics
- Music
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- Science
- Technology

Key Stage 4 (Years 11 and 12)

Determining the Curriculum Offer and Class Sizes:

Each year we undertake a trawl which is unique to that year group and their strengths and interests. Information from the trawl helps to inform the content of the curriculum which is specific to the year group. It is at this stage that decisions are made on the viability of subjects based on level of interest. Board of Governors reserve the right to withdraw the offer of a subject if it is deemed that the class size is too small. It is expected that classes will normally have a minimum of 14 pupils in a class, although in some circumstances allowances may be made for minority subjects or new courses being offered.

For the majority of subjects it is anticipated that the maximum class size will be 26. However, for practical subjects, the class size is lower to ensure the health and safety of pupils and staff members. Whilst practical subjects cannot exceed 20 as per DE guidelines, the upper limit will differ depending on the subject, the room setting and the activities being undertaken.

In the event of a course being oversubscribed, criteria will be applied in the order outlined below. Pupils will receive support from the curriculum team in determining an alternative course in the option block. Applied criteria is as follows:

- i. School held data indicates that the subject is a suitable choice for the pupil.
- ii. The pupil had indicated their preference for the subject during the initial trawl.
- iii. The date and time which the options form was returned (on a first come, first served basis)

Core Curriculum:

Pupils at Key Stage 4 will study a core curriculum consisting of English, Mathematics and Science at GCSE level. There is a statutory requirement that all pupils will attend classes in non-exam Religious Studies, Learning for Life and Work and Physical Education, although some may choose to study these subjects to examination level.

Subject Choice for Key Stage 4:

In addition to the core curriculum pupils will choose optional subjects, allowing a total of eight GCSE or equivalent subjects to be studied. These decisions are made in Year 10, where pupils choose from a range of subjects which enables them to progress onto a career pathway which is suited to their needs and aspirations.

Careers Education Information and Guidance (CEIAG) is given to all pupils before they choose the course which they will study. These pathways enable pupils to choose an academic route, vocational route, or a mixture of both. Based on school held data, some pupils may be offered a vocational pathway of study. This will involve a reduced number of courses with a high percentage of vocational qualifications and is aimed at providing pupils with the best opportunity to secure employment, traineeship or a place in one of the regional colleges at Post-16.

On occasion, pupils who start a course in Year 11 may find that they are not enjoying it. Moves may be possible depending on spaces in other subjects, but requested moves are not always possible. Requests to change courses must be made as soon as possible and before the end of September at the latest. Pupils are not permitted to drop out of courses.

Subjects Offered at Key Stage 4:

Subjects currently offered at Key Stage 4 are noted below. However, based on school held data new courses may be introduced to suit the needs and aspirations of the current school population. In addition, the Board of Governors reserve the right to withdraw subjects due to the viability of the course.

- Agriculture and Land Use (GCSE)
- Art and Design (GCSE)
- Business and Communication Systems (GCSE)
- Business and Services (OS)
- Business Studies (GCSE)
- Carpentry and Joinery (OS)
- Child Development (GCSE)
- Digital Information Technology (BTEC)
- Double Award Science (GCSE)
- Drama (GCSE)
- English Language (GCSE)
- English Literature (GCSE)
- Food and Nutrition (GCSE)
- Food Preparation (OS)
- French (GCSE)
- Further Mathematics (GCSE)
- Geography (GCSE)
- Graphic Design and Website Development (OS)
- History (GCSE)
- Horticulture (OS)
- Learning for Life and Work (GCSE)
- Leisure, Travel and Tourism (GCSE)
- Mathematics (GCSE)
- Media Studies (GCSE)
- Motor Vehicle and Road User Studies (GCSE)
- Music (GCSE)
- Photography & Creative Art (OS)
- Physical Education (GCSE)
- Preparation for Adult Life (L2)
- Prince's Trust (L2)
- Psychology (GCSE)
- Religious Studies (GCSE)
- Single Award Science (GCSE)
- Sport Level 2 (BTEC)
- Technology and Design (GCSE)

Key Stage 5 (Sixth Form - Years 13 and 14)

Ballyclare Secondary School offers a range of options for pupils returning to study. Each year we undertake a trawl which is unique to that year group and their strengths and interests. Information from the trawl helps to inform the content of the curriculum which is specific to the year group. It is at this stage that decisions are made on the viability of subjects based on level of interest. Board of Governors reserve the right to withdraw the offer of a subject if it is deemed that the class size is too small. It is expected that classes will normally have a minimum of 10 pupils in a class, although in some circumstances allowances may be made for minority subjects or new courses being offered.

Pupils are interviewed and advised on courses of study based on their ability and career aspirations. It is expected that all pupils will choose a minimum of three subjects to study in Sixth Form, but it is recognised that in a small number of cases it may be appropriate for only two courses to be undertaken. Decisions in this regard will be made on a case by case basis, focused on pupil need and will be evidenced based. Where pupils are studying a two course pathway they will be required to enrol on a number of enrichment courses as outlined overleaf.

Pupils wishing to enter the Sixth Form must:

- i. Achieve a minimum of 5 'C' grades at GCSE level, including at least a Grade C in GCSE English **and** Mathematics. Pupils may be admitted to Sixth Form if they have achieved a grade C in Maths or English and are able to prove that the missing grade is imminently attainable (through remark or resit and supported by the relevant HOD).
- ii. A minimum of **8 points** from **5 GCSE grades (or equivalent)** calculated on the basis of the GCSE results as follows:

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----------|----|---|----------|---|---|---------|
| A* | = | 5 Points | B | = | 3 Points | C | = | 1 Point |
| A | = | 4 Points | C* | = | 2 Points | | | |
| B | = | 3 Points | | | | | | |
- iii. Meet the essential criteria set out for each subject.
- iv. Choose and complete three subjects (or equivalent) over the two years.
- v. Have a history of good attendance, punctuality and behaviour.*

On occasion, pupils who start a course in Year 13 may find that they are not enjoying it. Moves may be possible depending on spaces in other subjects, but requested moves are not always possible. Requests to change courses must be made as soon as possible and before the end of September at the latest. Pupils are not permitted to drop out of courses.

Oversubscription:

If there are more pupils eligible than there are places available in the school, places shall be awarded in the following order:

1. Applicants with the highest GCSE score – an applicant's GCSE score being calculated on the basis of GCSE results on the following points system:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A* | = | 7 | A | = | 6 | B | = | 5 | C* | = | 4 | C | = | 3 | D | = | 2 | E | = | 1 |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
2. In the event of a tie, priority will be established by computerised random selection.
3. The Board of Governors reserve the right to admit pupils where there are verifiable Exceptional Circumstances.

Class sizes in Post 16 courses do not normally exceed 16. If there are more pupils eligible than there are places available in a course, places shall be awarded in the following order:

1. Applicants with the highest GCSE grade in the relevant subjects as outlined in the Options Booklet.
2. In the event of a tie, priority will be established by computerised random selection.
3. The Board of Governors reserve the right to admit pupils where there are verifiable Exceptional Circumstances.

AS/A2 Level Subjects:

- Art and Design
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Design and Technology
- Digital Technology
- English Literature
- French
- Geography
- Government and Politics
- Health and Social Care
- History
- Life and Health Science
- Mathematics
- Media Studies
- Moving Image Arts
- Music
- Nutrition and Food Science
- Performing Arts
- Professional Business Services
- Psychology
- Religious Studies

Level 3 BTEC National Extended Certificate in Sport (Single Award)

Level 3 BTEC National Extended Diploma in Sport (Double Award)

Level 3 BTEC Courses:

- BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate in Sport (Single Award)
- BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Sport (Double Award)
- BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Travel and Tourism
- BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Travel and Tourism
- BTEC Level 3 National Award in Children's Care, Learning and Development

** The Board of Governors reserve the right to not offer or withdraw a place in Sixth Form where evidence suggests that there is risk of underachievement for the pupil concerned or that of their peers. It is expected that attendance should be a minimum of 95% as indicated in the DE strategy to improve school attendance (<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/miss-school-miss-out-improving-pupil-attendance-strategy>). Achieving U grades in Year 13 would not normally be considered appropriate for progression to Year 14.*

Sixth Form Enrichment Programme.

At Ballyclare Secondary School it is recognised that young people are best placed for entry to adult life through gaining a broad range of experiences that go beyond academic performance. For this reason, pupils returning to Sixth Form will be able to follow an extended Enrichment Programme consisting of aspects such as:

- Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance
- Study Buddy Programme
- Peer Mentoring
- Student Forum
- Social Committee
- Private study (Each pupil will have four periods per subject)
- Positions of responsibility: Head Boy, Head Girl and Prefects
- Enrichment Days
- Work Experience
- School Choir

The Enrichment Programme is offered based on the needs of the pupils and the skills available on staff and may therefore be adapted annually.

Careers

Two periods over the two week timetable are devoted to Careers in Year 13 and one period in 14. These sessions are intended to prepare the pupils for the various pathways they wish to pursue post 18 and for life after school. Guest speakers from various professions, Apprenticeships and universities are invited to address the pupils.

Area Learning Community

The school is a member of the Ballyclare Learning Community. Ballyclare Secondary has both contributed to and benefited from the curriculum offer in the Area Learning Community which works to broaden the curriculum offer in each of the schools. Subjects offered at Post 16 which are studied at an alternative location will be highlighted in the Key Stage 5 Options literature. The school currently meets the requirements for full implementation of the Entitlement Framework as required by The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.