

Blackfen School for Girls



Curriculum Policy

Headteacher: Ms C Senior
Chair of Governors: Mr W Stone

	Date	Name	Signature
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Lead Person	DHT, Curriculum	Fiona Minnis	
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Verified by	Headteacher	Carrie Senior	
Approved by	Chair of Governors	William Stone	

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Rationale

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy reflects the requirements for academies to provide a broad and balanced curriculum as per the Academies Act 2010, and the National Curriculum programmes of study which the school has chosen to follow. It reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014 and Equality Act 2010 and refers to curriculum-related expectations of governing boards set out in the Department for Education's Governance Handbook. It complies with our funding agreement and articles of association. The Policy also outlines the principles of assessment at Blackfen School which help to ensure that every student is making good progress on their individual curriculum journeys.

Our vision

The vision of Blackfen School is summed up as 'Raising aspirations, releasing potential'. On a daily basis, we believe in raising aspirations and inspiring a belief that 'anything is possible'. We nurture the values of resilience, respect and responsibility, so that students are ready to contribute positively to the wider community, now and in the future. These are the values which underpin the design and content of our curriculum offer.

Our principles of curriculum design

Our curriculum is designed to endorse the vision of the school: to be broad, balanced and aspirational for all our students, providing them with opportunities to study a wide range of subjects and immerse themselves in challenging and rewarding learning experiences. The curriculum is reviewed on an annual basis and is quality assured by school and subject leaders, as well as external agencies.

The content of our curriculum changes intentionally to support students' curriculum journeys across the key stages. Students have an increasing amount of choice in their curriculum studies as they get older, particularly in Year 9, when they select Key Stage 4 courses and again, in Year 11, in their transition from Key Stage 4 into Key Stage 5. ([Appendix A: Curriculum overview and structure for 2025-2026](#)).

- A 3-year Key Stage 3 ensures students can experience the full National Curriculum across the following subjects: English, Mathematics, Science: Art, Computing and ICT, Dance, Drama, French or Spanish, Food Technology, Geography, History, Music, Social, Personal and Cultural Studies, incorporating PPE (Politics, Philosophy, and Enterprise), Religious Education and PSHE; Physical Education, Product Design and Textiles Technology.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum broadens to include the additional subjects of Citizenship, Health and Social Care, Business Studies, Enterprise and Statistics, as well as the development of leadership skills through the selection of either the 'Sports Leaders' or the 'Dance Leaders' Awards.
- The Key Stage 5 curriculum is further extended to offer the new subjects of Government and Politics, Law, Psychology, Sociology, Media and Film Studies. The curriculum offer is deliberately broadened to include both BTEC and A-Level pathways in Law, Business and Media. A small group of students is offered the GCSE Mathematics re-sit course, as required.

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PART A - CURRICULUM INTENT

We consider the intent of our curriculum carefully in order to offer challenging learning within a supportive and inclusive environment. This means that we plan to meet the needs of all of our students, irrespective of their ability or additional needs and to ensure that curriculum opportunity, aspiration and access is available for all. We support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to promote tolerance and respect for the range of faiths, lifestyles and cultures they will embrace as young adults in society.

In addition, we recognise the importance of subject literacy to propel good progress across the curriculum, in all key stages. The reading age of every student in the school is assessed. This means that students who are identified as working below their chronological reading age receive bespoke reading catch up, so that they can learn effectively in every subject.

Features of the Key Stage 3 Curriculum (Year 7 – Year 9)

- In addition to a core curriculum of mathematics, science and English, all students follow courses in Art, Design and Technology, Expressive Arts, Computing and ICT, and Humanities.
- Each year group is divided into two halves of equal ability, with four classes in each half of the year group.
- In the core subjects, there is one ability set for students with high attainment in Key Stage 2 tests and three mixed ability teaching groups.
- All students study a modern language (Spanish or French) in Year 7 to Year 9. Spanish is studied in teaching groups A-D and French is studied in teaching groups E-H.
- Key Stage 3 students study Social, Personal and Cultural Studies (SPCS) comprising PSHE, RSE alongside Politics, Philosophy and Enterprise (PPE) and Religious Studies, thereby fulfilling statutory requirements.
- Dance and Drama are taught in a half termly rotation: four teaching groups each study Drama and Dance. Each half term these groups swap to study the other discipline.
- Technology is taught as a rotation of Food Technology, Textiles Technology and Product Design. The eight teaching groups are divided into 12 smaller groups of 20 students and each term they study the next discipline.

Features of the Key Stage 4 Curriculum (Year 10 – Year 11)

- In Year 10 and Year 11 all students follow the Key Stage 4 core curriculum comprising English Language, English Literature, Combined Science, Mathematics and Citizenship or Religious Studies (both subjects can be studied).
- Physical Education is also part of the core curriculum. In Year 10, students choose to study *either* the Sports Leaders *or* Dance Leaders courses.
- Students also have the opportunity to choose up to three more courses across the arts, vocational subjects, Design and Technology, Humanities, Modern Languages and the Expressive Arts.
- Students' first Key Stage 4 curriculum choice must be selected from History, Geography or a modern language.
- Students can choose to study 'triple science' as the separate disciplines of Biology, Chemistry and Physics.
- Students are also given the opportunity to take their heritage language as an additional language qualification.

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Features of the Key Stage 5 Curriculum (Year 12 – Year 13)

- There is an excellent range of academic and vocational subjects available.
- Most students select three Level 3 subjects with a small number studying four subjects.
- The Extended Project Qualification is offered in Year 13.
- Timetabled Supervised Study periods are scheduled for every student.
- One week of Work Experience is scheduled in the Spring term of Year 12.
- A wide and varied enrichment programme supports the development of new skills and interests.
- There is provision of guided careers advice and a 'Next Steps' programme using the Unifrog platform.
- There is provision of pastoral care via daily Form Time with a Form Tutor and resourced tutor programme which includes academic mentoring, target setting and PSHE.
- A programme of personal development through weekly PSHE sessions covers a wide range of topics such as Study Skills, growth mindset development, driver safety education, dangers of alcohol and drugs, politics, healthy lifestyles, mental health and crime and justice.

PART B - CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Every student at Blackfen School should know that their daily, lived experience of the curriculum is crafted with care and consideration in its implementation, both in and out of classrooms and learning spaces.

Every parent and carer should be sure that the intended curriculum for students is ambitious and planned for progression; that the planned curriculum is inclusive and implemented skilfully; and that the implemented curriculum is achieved and learnt by all students, regardless of background and starting point.

Every teacher during their tenure at Blackfen School (and regardless of career experience and level of professional responsibility) needs to be confident in their professional knowledge of effective curriculum implementation with regard to the sequencing, order and coherence of learning that achieves rigour in subject delivery and success in student achievement. All teaching staff participate in a carefully planned professional development programme which blends reflection, review and collaborative learning in order to:

- Update the professional knowledge of teachers at Blackfen School on curriculum design, implementation and delivery of Quality First Teaching.
- Equip teachers at Blackfen School with the skills to develop subject curricular that are ambitious, challenging and firmly rooted in the school's pursuit of 'Raising aspirations - releasing potential'.
- Ensure the inclusivity and relevance of the curriculum at Blackfen School for the staff who deliver it and the students who learn its content.

A termly programme of Faculty Reviews comprising work sampling, learning walks and lesson visits supports the quality assurance of curriculum implementation in terms of academic learning; the inclusivity and relevance of learning to students; and the provision of personal development beyond formal learning experiences.

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The distinctive features of curriculum implementation at Blackfen School:

- i) Curriculum delivery that is inclusive
- ii) Teaching and learning intentionally tailored to support Blackfen School teachers and students
- iii) Personal development beyond formal learning experiences

i) Curriculum delivery that is inclusive

Students with SEND are taught in mainstream classes. Their curriculum is adapted in teachers' planning through reference to specialist materials such as the Bexley SEND toolkit; guidance from the SENDCO team and from professional reports for individual students. Students with an EHC Plan are supported by teaching assistants in English, mathematics or other selected subjects, depending on the guidance of the EHC Plan.

'Jigsaw' is the school's Resource Provision, established primarily for students with an EHC Plan and speech and language needs. Students are placed in the provision by the local authority. As part of their Year 7 induction, they visit the school on several occasions from Easter to July to meet teaching and support staff and to get to know the school, prior to Year 7 entry in September. In Key Stage 3, students in 'Jigsaw' work on an adapted curriculum for English, Mathematics, History and Geography and attend mainstream lessons for other subjects. Specialist SEND teachers, working closely with Subject Leaders, adapt schemes of learning for personalised delivery. Students in Year 7 and Year 8 are prepared for the study of Entry Level English and Mathematics qualifications in Key Stage 4. In Year 9, some students may transfer to mainstream lessons for a subject if they have reached the appropriate level at the end of Year 8.

At Key Stage 4, students in 'Jigsaw' continue to develop their literacy and numeracy skills via Entry Level qualifications in English and mathematics. In Year 9, they select Key Stage 4 courses for study in Year 10 and Year 11 but have the opportunity to select one option block to remain in 'Jigsaw' or in the Key Stage 4 'Phoenix' provision in order to develop basic skills or to have additional time with a teacher to focus on their GCSE work.

The 'Jigsaw Plus' pathway has been designed for students with complex and severe cognitive impairments and learning difficulties, which in turn leads to significant delays in reaching development milestones. This pathway aims to provide broad, balanced and meaningful learning experiences tailored to the needs of the individual student and uses the Engagement Model to track progress. Students also have the opportunity to achieve Unit Award certificates in relevant subject areas.

ii) Teaching and learning intentionally tailored to support Blackfen School teachers and students

Our curriculum implementation is characterised by the following features:

- Personal development, leadership and independence in learning
- Development of reading skills
- Curriculum guidance for students at key stage transition points

- Personal development, leadership and independence in learning

The subjects of Drama and Dance in Key Stage 3 – Key Stage 5, and Social, Personal and Cultural Studies in Key Stage 3 offer a raft of opportunities for personal development. Drama and Dance build students'

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confidence through performance and creativity, whilst developing skills of leadership and communication. Key Stage 4 students can opt to study for the Sports Leader or the Dance Leader Awards during their Year 10 PE lessons. These courses use dance, sport and physical activity to help young people hone their teamwork and leadership skills, whilst helping themselves and others stay physically active.

The Social, Personal and Cultural Studies (SPCS) in the Key Stage 3 curriculum is unique to Blackfen School. It combines the statutory requirements of Personal, Health, Social and Economic (PSHE) education, and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) with the Blackfen School curricula for Religious Studies, and Politics, Philosophy and Enterprise. The Social, Personal and Cultural Studies curriculum provides students with a holistic and thematic approach to exploring themselves and their views in relation to our society, enabling them to learn and grow, as individuals and as part of the national and global communities. These lessons are supplemented by the Pastoral Curriculum which is delivered during Community Time and sessions 'off timetable' to enable students to make cross-curricular links throughout their learning journey, thereby providing a robust foundation for their wider education.

Social, Personal and Cultural Studies contributes significantly to the development of independent learning, leadership and communication as students are encouraged to develop their political, religious and social awareness; to open their minds and think for themselves, questioning their own worldviews and beliefs; reflecting on why they think the way they do and on the influences that shape their thinking. Students learn about other views within society and explore how they have shaped social interaction and how we behave and view ourselves, and how we relate to other people. They are able to better understand and celebrate their own identity and to celebrate diversity and inclusion within the school, develop and maintain healthy relationships, and take ownership of who they are and of their own learning. Students continue to develop their academic knowledge to prepare them for the study of GCSE Religious Studies or GCSE Citizenship, A Level Religious Studies or A Level Politics, should they decide to take up these curriculum options.

- Development of reading skills

The Literacy Co-ordinator delivers the whole school reading programme in partnership with the Librarian and the Head of English. The reading programme focuses on developing students' reading habits through special activities such as themed assemblies for World Book Day, and the distribution of a 'Wider Reading Booklet' across all subject areas. Other literacy initiatives organised during the school year include participation in the Jack Petchey 'Speak Out' awards; the Year 7 Halloween Writing Competition; the Reading Scrapbook Challenge and competitions run to celebrate World Book Day. The Librarian works with the Literacy Co-ordinator to host special Library reading events such as the Year 7 and Year 8 - Year 10 Book Clubs; the Bexley Children's Book Quiz and the Carnegie Book Club, as well as the student Librarian scheme.

In addition to these activities, Year 7 and Year 8 students spend a bi-weekly dedicated lesson in the Library to use the 'Accelerated Reader' programme as part of their English lessons and weekly homework of one hour reading per week. The Literacy Co-ordinator collates and analyses reading data from these particular sessions to support relevant intervention. In Library lessons, selected students use 'Bedrock Learning' to improve their literacy skills through guided independent reading. In Year 7, students whose reading age is significantly below their chronological age follow the 'Hackney Literacy Intervention Toolkit' programme to boost their range and grasp of vocabulary and grammar in order to engage fully with our English curriculum. All students from Year 7 to Year 13 sit reading tests annually and this data is shared with all staff.

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- Curriculum guidance for students at key stage transition points

Personalised guidance from experienced staff, school and subject leaders is embedded in our curriculum implementation to ensure coherence throughout students' learning journeys, as well as to support their curriculum choices and future aspirations. The school is working to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks and students in all year groups benefit from an established programme of careers education which supplements the on-going curriculum guidance at key stage transition points.

From Key Stage 2 into Key Stage 3

The Year 7 Induction programme includes taster lessons for students in a variety of Year 7 subjects on our "Welcome Day", and a "Welcome Evening" for parents and carers, when we clarify school expectations and answer questions. After a settling-in period, a 'Parents Evening' with Form Tutors reviews how Year 7 students are settling in and addresses academic transition.

From Key Stage 3 into Key Stage 4

Year 9 students participate in Key Stage 4 taster lessons to experience for themselves something of the content and nature of learning in Year 10 and Year 11. The Year 9 Parents Evening is scheduled so that students and their parents and carers have time to discuss the selection of Key Stage 4 courses with subject teachers before making their final selection of GCSE or BTEC courses. Year 9 students review and agree their selection of Key Stage 4 courses in their individual meeting with a member of the school's Leadership Team.

Key Stage 4 into Key Stage 5

Every Year 11 student has an individual meeting with a member of the Leadership Team to discuss their rationale and plans for Post-16 courses and to review their selection of Key Stage 5 courses. As part of an established programme, the Head of Sixth Form also meets all Year 11 students in small groups to introduce the Sixth Form and talk about the subjects on offer. At the end of Year 10 and continuing into Year 11, all students attend an individual post-16 careers pathway interview with the 'Prospects' careers advisor.

From Key Stage 5 into post-19 education, training or employment

The Key Stage 5 'Next Steps' workshop supports the UCAS and apprenticeship application processes and is complemented by a 'Next Steps' Information Evening for parents to inform parents and carers about the UCAS application process and higher and degree level apprenticeships. Students attend the UCAS convention and are encouraged to visit open days, insight days and virtual work experience activities. External providers are invited into school to talk to students in Year 13 who are seeking to take up apprenticeships and all students are able to attend the 'Skills for London' careers event, as well as a work experience week. All students have access to an 'Insights and opportunities' MS Team, where they are informed of events, activities and opportunities supporting their careers and futures planning. Year 12 students receive careers guidance through Personal Development sessions and Community Time. Unifrog is used from their first day in Year 12 through to completion of their courses in Year 13 for recording all careers guidance.

iii) Personal development outside formal learning experiences

Community Time is scheduled for 30 minutes every day, during which time students in Year 7 to Year 13 are organised in tutor groups, and follow a planned schedule of activities, including numeracy, reading and the Pastoral Curriculum. They also discuss current affairs and review topical issues.

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DICE is the school's extra-curricular programme. It schedules lunchtime and after-school activities at four different levels: **D**iscover: Learn about for the first time; **I**nitiate: Try out for the first time; **C**hallenge: Extend learning and performance, and **E**lite: Develop expert learning and performance. The *DICE* programme promotes challenge and scholarship, thereby reflecting the school's approach to adopting growth mindset attitudes to learning in all of its forms and supporting the ultimate aim of the school to 'raise aspirations and release potential' in all of our students.

Discover is a Key Stage 3 end-of-year event for students in Year 7 – Year 9 which delivers aspects of cultural capital learning, opportunities to consider career options, as well as the chance to apply personal aspiration and try out a new activity for the first time. *Discover* provides time for students to develop personal strengths as well-rounded individuals, as they explore new interests, learning environments, skills, challenges and have fun.

PART C: CURRICULUM IMPACT

One of the immediate impacts of our curriculum is seen in students' continuing academic achievement. However, we recognise that the long-term story of our students' lives as young and mature adults represents the most accurate description of the impact of curriculum experience and learning at Blackfen School over the course of 5 - 7 years.

The choices of initial destinations of Year 11 and Year 13 students (recorded to date) after completing Summer 2024 public examinations suggest that the impact of the curriculum is an experience that has been well lived and enjoyed and will continue at Blackfen School in 2025-2026.

Year 11		
Destination	Number of students	Percentage of students
End of phase transfer - FE/6th form college	133	59.64%
Other reason	13	5.83%
Normal leaving age - Training	11	4.93%
Continued at Blackfen's Sixth Form	66	29.60%
Grand Total	223	100%

Year 13		
Destination	Number of students	Percentage of students
Normal leaving age - Employment	34	23.13%
Normal leaving age - Higher education institutions	82	55.78%
Normal leaving age - Training	19	12.93%
Normal leaving age – unemployed	1	0.68%
Other	4	2.72%
Unknown*	7	4.76%
Grand Total	147	100%

* Unknown: Destinations data is still being collected and processed at the time of writing.

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APPENDIX A – Curriculum structure for 2025-2026

Key Stage 3 curriculum and structure (Year 7 – Year 9)

- Each year group is divided into two halves of equal ability for the teaching of core subjects, with four classes in each half of the year in year 8 and 9, and year 7 taught in a total of seven classes.
- In Year 9, students begin the GCSE Science course in February.

Core subjects	Number of lessons per fortnight			Key Stage 3 delivery
	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	
English	9	7	7	One high ability set and then mixed ability groups in each half of the year.
Mathematics	7	7	7	
Science	6	6	6	

Foundation subjects are delivered in four teaching groups (A-D and E-H) in each half of the year, comprising one high ability set and three mixed ability groups.

Foundation subjects	Number of lessons per fortnight			Key Stage 3 delivery
	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	
Art and Design	2	2	2	
Dance	2	2	2	In a half-termly rotation with Dance
Drama	2	2	2	In a half-termly rotation with Drama
Music	2	2	2	
Physical Education	3	3	3	
Technology	2	2	2	Teaching groups A-H split into 12 groups of 20 students
History	4	4	4	
Geography	4	4	4	
PPE, RS and SPCS	4	4	4	
Computing/ICT		2	2	
French	4	4	4	Teaching groups E to H only
Spanish	4	4	4	Teaching groups A to D only

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Key Stage 4 curriculum and structure (Year 10 – Year 11)

For the delivery of Key Stage 4 English, Mathematics and Science, Year 10 and Year 11 students are divided into the 'X' pathway and 'Y' pathway:

- Pathway X: Four teaching groups set by ability in each subject discipline.
- Pathway Y: Five smaller teaching groups set by ability in each subject discipline.

Core subjects	Number of lessons per fortnight in Year 10	Number of lessons per fortnight in Year 11	Key Stage 4 delivery
English	8	8	GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature
Mathematics	8	8	GCSE Mathematics
Science	9	8	Combined Science (Equivalent to 2 GCSEs) Or Triple Science, if offered to students as one of their Year 9 options (Equivalent to 3 GCSEs)
Religious Studies or Citizenship	5	4	Students choose <i>one</i> of these courses to study
PE	2	2	Students take Core PE and can opt to study <i>either</i> Sports Leaders or Dance Leaders courses as part of their Core PE lessons

- Foundation subjects (listed in the table below) are delivered in three 'blocks' in each half of the year group, comprising of mixed ability blocks. Key Stage 4 Foundation subjects offered for selection in 2025-2026 are shown in the table below. These are GCSE qualifications unless stated otherwise.
- Six lessons per fortnight are allocated to each subject.

History	Music	Cambridge Nationals in ICT
Geography	Cambridge Nationals in Sport	Computer Science
Fine Art	Food Technology and Nutrition	French
Photography	Textiles	Spanish
Dance	Business	BTEC Health and Social Care
Drama	BTEC Enterprise	

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Key Stage 5 Curriculum and structure (Year 12 – Year 13)

Year 11 students are offered a place in our mixed Sixth Form (subject to meeting each the required grade criteria). The Key Stage 5 options are decided after students have indicated their provisional preferences which means that the curriculum offer varies year on year. The GCSE Mathematics resit course is offered to a small number of students, if required.

The Key Stage 5 courses offered for selection in 2025-26 are shown in the table below and are A Level qualifications unless stated otherwise:

Art and Design: Fine Art	Geography	Textiles
Art and Design: Photography	History	
Biology	Law	BTEC Business
Business	Mathematics	Food Science and Nutrition
Chemistry	Core Maths (AS 1 year)	BTEC Health and Social Care
Dance	Media Studies	BTEC ICT
Drama	Politics	BTEC Law
English Literature	Psychology	BTEC Media Studies
Film Studies	Religious Studies	BTEC Science
French	Sociology	BTEC Sport

Number of lessons allocated to subjects in Year 12 and Year 13 per two-week cycle of 50 lessons

	Number of lessons
A Level qualifications	10
BTEC, OCR and Cambridge Nationals Level 3 qualifications	10
PSHRE	2
GCSE Mathematics re-sit course (Year 12 only)	8

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Key roles

- **Governors:** To ensure that the following elements of curriculum planning, delivery and evaluation are actioned, as set out in the terms of reference of the Curriculum Committee: that a robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets; that the school is complying with its funding agreement and teaching a "broad and balanced curriculum" which includes English, maths, and science, and enough teaching time is provided for students to cover the requirements of the funding agreement; that proper provision is made for students with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs (SEND); that all courses provided for students below the age of 19 that lead to qualifications, such as GCSEs and A-levels, are approved by the secretary of state; that the school implements the relevant statutory assessment arrangements; that Governors participate actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum.
- **Headteacher:** To ensure that this policy is adhered to and that all required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the needs of individual students will be met; that the amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the Governing Body; that requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects, where appropriate, are managed correctly; that the school's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements; that the Governing Body is fully involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum and is advised on whole-school targets in order to make informed decisions; that proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with SEND.
- **DHT/AHTs (Curriculum/Quality of Education):** To liaise with subject leaders in order to quality assure curriculum procedures and documentation; to ensure production of the school timetable and its financial management.
- **DHT/AHTs (Curriculum/Quality of Education):** To quality assure curriculum intervention strategies relating to student outcomes.
- **SENDCO:** To quality assure curriculum provision and intervention strategies relating to SEND students.
- **Subject Leaders:** To be knowledgeable about subject pedagogy and able to lead teaching teams in planning and designing lessons that deliver subject curriculum to be challenging and enjoyable and suitably ambitious for all groups of students, including students with high prior attainment; students with low prior attainment; students from disadvantaged backgrounds; students with SEND; students with English as an additional language (EAL).
- **Teachers:** To follow guidance in planning, designing and delivering their subject curriculum for all students in the class to be able to make good progress in learning.
- **Students:** To demonstrate growth mindset attitudes to subject learning in every lesson; to take responsibility for participating in extra-curricular opportunities and for exploring learning in the wider curriculum, outside formal lessons.
- **Parents/Carers:** To work with teachers and leaders to support students' effective learning in lessons and at home; to work with subject staff by attending Parents Evenings to discuss students' academic progress; to support, where possible, students' participation in extra-curricular activities.

Related documents

- Feedback policy, Teaching and Learning Charter, Non-examination assessment policy, SEND policy, RSE and PSHE policy; Equality information and policy.