

# Blackfen School for Girls



## Curriculum Policy

Head Teacher: Mr M Brown  
Chair of Governors: Mr S Fitz-Gerald

	Date	Name	Signature
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Lead Person	DHT, Curriculum	Fiona Minnis	
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Approved by	Chair of Governors	Stuart Fitz-Gerald	

The Governing Body of Blackfen School for Girls adopted this Curriculum Policy in October 2021.

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## Statutory statement

This 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 also 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.

## RATIONALE

The mission statement of Blackfen School is 'Raising aspirations, releasing potential'. The outcome of this goal is summed up in our vision statement:

*We believe that our school community is a happy and successful one because we offer a unique learning experience of ongoing challenge in a caring environment. Blackfen sets out to challenge students from day one in Year 7 to their last exam in Year 13.*

*We believe in hard work, resilience and a determination to succeed, learning from the lessons of failure to become successful. We believe in raising the aspirations of everyone in our community of inspiring a belief that 'anything is possible' amongst our students, staff, governors and parents.*

*We believe in developing our students into confident, responsible citizens ready to play an active role in the wider community.*

The intent of the curriculum at Blackfen School is to implement the school vision: to raise the aspirations and release the potential of every young person in our care, on a daily basis. This means that the content and design of our curriculum is crafted to be broad, balanced and aspirational for all our students and to provide them with opportunities to study a wide range of subjects.

We consider the needs of all of our students, irrespective of their ability, additional needs or gender, to ensure that curriculum opportunity and access is available for all. In addition, 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.

We believe that good teaching, underpinned by an appropriate curriculum and effective delivery of Relationships and sex education (RSE) and Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education inspires in our students a belief that 'anything is possible' and develops them into confident, responsible citizens, ready to play an active role in the wider community.

## OUTCOMES

### 1) A curriculum that is broad, balanced and appropriate for our students

Our curriculum is crafted to be broad, balanced and appropriate for all our students and to provide them with opportunities to study a wide range of subjects.

- A 3-year Key Stage 3 ensures students can experience the full National Curriculum across 17 subjects: English, Mathematics, Science: Art, Computing and ICT, Dance, Drama, French or Spanish, Food Technology, Geography, History, Music, PPE, Physical Education, Religious Studies, Product Design and Textiles Technology.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum broadens to include the additional subjects of Citizenship, Economics, Health & Social Care, Business Studies and Statistics, as well as developing leadership skills through the selection of either the 'Sports Leaders' or the 'Dance Leaders' awards or the 'Duke of Edinburgh' award (Bronze).
- The Key Stage 5 curriculum is further extended to offer the new subjects of Government and Politics, Law, Psychology, Sociology and Media. The curriculum offer is deliberately broadened to include both

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BTEC and A-Level pathways in Law, Business and Media. A small group of students are offered a bespoke Year 12 Level 2 course which includes GCSE English and Mathematics re-sit courses, as well as a package of BTEC Level 2 qualifications.

The formal curriculum structures, described above, are complemented by a series of 'Challenge Days', when all students in Year 7 – Year 13 are taken off timetable to explore RSE or PSHE topics or to experience a different type of learning, e.g. meeting a Holocaust survivor; exploring International Women's week; learning how to 'Express Yourself' or singing in a themed Gospel-day year-group choir. Many of the Challenge Day topics contribute to a rich delivery of cultural capital learning and experience. Our RSE and PSHE programme is delivered in diverse and age-appropriate activities, which take place across the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 Curriculum, as well as in Challenge Days.

## **2) A curriculum that is dynamic**

The design of our curriculum is dynamic, changing intentionally to support students' learning journeys from one key stage to the next key stage. Students have an increasing amount of flexibility 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 and, if they so choose, into our mixed Sixth Form. We recognise our responsibility to prepare our students for a world of employment, leisure and experience that is itself dynamic and unpredictable, so School leaders listen to Subject leaders, to students and to parents in order to make careful changes to the curriculum, for example, introducing new courses such as Economics and Computing Science. The school is pro-active in reviewing curriculum content but School leaders always consider the impact of curriculum change on students, teachers and school life across the whole organisation.

## **3) A curriculum that is distinctive to learning and teaching in Blackfen School**

Our curriculum includes three suites of special features that are distinctive to learning and teaching in this school:

### **Suite 3.1: The acquisition of knowledge and cultural capital across different subject pedagogy**

- *Vertical tutor groups*

Daily 'Community Time' is scheduled for 20 minutes, during which time students in Year 7- Year 11 are organised in vertical age tutor groups, with approximately four students from each year group making up a tutor group. During Community Time, students follow a planned schedule of activities, including numeracy, reading and personal well-being. They also discuss current affairs and review topical issues.

- *Developing personal reading habits*

The Literacy Co-ordinator liaises with the Head of English and the Librarian to deliver the whole-school reading programme which focuses on developing students' reading habits through the weekly 'Drop Everything And Read' activity which takes place on a weekly basis in tutor groups and is part of the Community Time programme; special assemblies for International Literacy Day and World Book Day, as well as their associated events; the use of 'PiXL Unlock' to extend students' personal vocabulary repertoires; and the distribution of a 'Wider Reading Booklet' across all subject areas, to support learning across a knowledge-rich curriculum. Other literacy initiatives organised during the school year include preparation for the Jack Petchey 'Speak Out' awards; the Goldsmiths University Poetry Scheme; the School Magazine; the Year 7 Halloween Writing Competition and the Literacy 'Show and Tell' event. The Librarian works with the Literacy Co-ordinator to host special Library reading events such as the Year 7 and Year 8-10 Book Clubs; the Governors' Book Review award; the Bexley Children's Book Quiz; the Bexley Poetry Slam; the Carnegie Book Club, as well as participation as a student Librarian. In addition to these activities, students in Year 7 and Year 8 spend a dedicated lesson in the Library to use the 'Accelerated Reader' programme as part of their English lessons and the Literacy Co-ordinator collates and analyses reading data from these particular sessions, in order to support relevant intervention.

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- *Developing the skills of independent learning, personal leadership and communication*

The subjects of Drama, Dance and PPE (Politics, Philosophy and Enterprise) are included in all key stages. Drama and Dance build students' confidence through performance and creativity, whilst developing skills of leadership and communication. Key Stage 4 students select to study for the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award or the Sports Leader or the Dance Leader Awards for their core 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 Key Stage 3 Politics, Philosophy and Enterprise (PPE) curriculum is unique to Blackfen School and contributes significantly to the development of independent learning, leadership and communication through study of Key Stage 3 Citizenship, Politics, Philosophy and Enterprise. In these studies, students are encouraged to develop their political awareness; to open their minds and think for themselves, reflecting on why they think the way they do and on the influences that shape their thinking; and to consider their responsibility for financial well-being in their economic futures. Key Stage 3 PPE provides a suitable pathway into continuing studies of this nature in Key Stage 4 GCSE Citizenship and Key Stage 5 A-Level Politics.

- *Key Stage 4 development of personal and moral values*

We believe that our students should be prepared for life as young adults by being provided with significant opportunities to practise the skills of thinking, reasoning and debating; to reflect deeply on ethical and moral values, and to begin developing life-long personal value systems. So the Key Stage 4 course selection process features a choice made by our students to study either GCSE Religious Studies or GCSE Citizenship courses.

- *Key Stage 4 development of personal leadership skills*

Year 10 GCSE Citizenship students lead and organise the annual Citizenship Fair, as part of their GCSE course. Previous guests at the Citizenship Fair have included the Mayor of Bexley, Sally Knox from the Rob Knox Foundation, James Cleverly MP and James Brokenshire MP. Year 10 GCSE Citizenship students also lead the organisation of Black History month and the school's annual 'International Week': a celebration of different cultures and British Values, culminating in an 'International Evening', which celebrates the multiple cultures expressed in the school.

Year 11 GCSE Citizenship students reflect on their personal and social skills and physical fitness in the annual trip to India to develop understanding of global politics, experiencing diverse environments outside their normal day-to-day lives. Links between Blackfen School and international school, Hari Shree Vidyalayam (<http://www.harishree.org>), have established a valued annual teacher exchange project, which is supported by the British Council.

- *Key Stage 5 bespoke curriculum for Level 2 students in Year 12*

The bespoke Year 12 Level 2 curriculum offer includes GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics retake opportunities, as well as Level 2 BTEC courses in 'Public services', 'Law and Legal', and 'Work skills'. The Sixth Form Transition Co-ordinator meets students individually to help them decide their next steps. The 'Skills for Growth' provider also supports Level 2 students with CV writing and interview skills.

- *Curriculum delivery outside lessons: DICE – the extra-curricular programme*

The *DICE* programme schedules extra-curricular 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. Some of these sessions run after-school and an open invitation may be issued to parents to attend. The special feature of the extra-curricular programme at Blackfen School is its inclusion of high-level 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.

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## **Suite 3.2: Supporting students' aspirations for next-stage learning and future employment**

Curriculum guidance from experienced staff is embedded in our curriculum implementation to ensure coherence throughout students' learning journeys, as well as to support their curriculum preferences and future aspirations. The school's guidance is allied closely with input from our family partnerships and their valued advice and interest.

- *Curriculum guidance from Key Stage 2 into Key Stage 3*

The Year 7 Induction programme includes taster lessons in a variety of Year 7 subjects and a Summer School. An initial 'Parents Evening' with Community Tutors reviews how Year 7 students are settling in and addresses academic transition. A second evening event introduces Year 7 parents to the school's Growth Mindset philosophy and practice, which is an intrinsic element in students' learning journeys and in the school's delivery of their curriculum.

- *Curriculum guidance from Key Stage 3 into Key Stage 4*

Year 9 students participate in two weeks of 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 deliberately split over two evenings, so that students and their parents and carers have sufficient time to discuss the selection of Key Stage 4 courses with subject teachers. This process concludes with each Year 9 student having their own 1-2-1 interview with a member of the Leadership Team to review and agree their final Key Stage 4 curriculum.

There is significant input from the school's Careers and Work Experience Co-ordinator during the transition from Key Stage 3 into Key Stage 4, as we recognise that Key Stage 4 curriculum choices will start to shape some aspects of students' future learning and employment opportunities after Year 11 and Year 13. Whilst ensuring that their Key Stage 4 curriculum provides a broad and robust platform for a range of post-19 education, training and career options, we also carefully introduce Year 9 students to the world of work and employment. All Year 9 students use the Careers programme, 'Kudos' in guided careers work during Community Time and attend either an individual or small group interview with an independent careers advisor from 'Prospects'. Year 9 students and parents are also invited to the annual Blackfen Careers Forum, in March. Over 40 organisations attend this event, including emergency and uniformed services; apprenticeship, further and higher education providers; and a broad range of employers and trainers including the NHS, Law firms and Solicitors, Architects, Construction, Teaching and the Performing Arts.

- *Curriculum guidance from Key Stage 4 into Key Stage 5*

Every Year 11 student has an individual interview 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 Sixth Form Transition Co-ordinator also meets all Year 11 students in small community groups, when she introduces the Sixth Form and talks 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.

- *Curriculum guidance from Key Stage 5 into post-19 education, training or employment*

The Key Stage 5 'Next Steps' Challenge Day supports the UCAS application process 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; a trip to Sussex University to participate in a 'student-life' lecture and campus tour; as well as the London University taster courses programme. External providers (e.g. PWC) run a workshop session in school on degree apprenticeships in September of Year 13 and students seeking apprenticeships attend the 'Skills for London' event. All students are offered meetings with the Sixth Form Transition Co-ordinator to help with application for apprenticeships. During the 'Careers workshop' Challenge Day, a number of external providers come into school to give short presentations on their career. Help for

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students seeking apprenticeships is provided in conjunction with the Apprenticeship training provider, 'Middleton Murray'.

## **Suite 3.3: Careers input from Year 7 – Year 13**

The school has achieved the Careers Award Mark, underlining the high-quality Careers input embedded in the curriculum and led by the Careers and Work Experience Co-ordinator. Our student Careers Ambassadors support Careers provision across the school, including at the annual Blackfen Careers Fair. Students also receive independent guidance from a 'Prospects' Careers advisor, who works in the school. Appropriate and enjoyable Careers guidance is delivered during the following events:

- Year 7 and Year 8 Challenge Days: 'Kudos' on-line tool for use in school and at home; the 'STEAM' event.
- Year 9: 'Kudos' sessions; small group 'Prospects' careers meetings; attendance at the Year 9 Key Stage 4 course selection evening by the 'Prospects' Careers advisor; invitation to students and parents to attend the Blackfen School and Bexley Careers Fairs.
- Year 10: The Blackfen School and Bexley Careers Fairs; pre-Work Experience preparation with the 'Rah-Rah Theatre company'; Careers 'speed networking' event'; two weeks of Work Experience at the end of Year 10.
- Year 11: Work Experience de-briefing session and follow-up; Careers 'lunchtime talks' programme, including Kings College for Medicine and Oxford University; individual meetings with the 'Prospects' Careers advisor; individual meetings with the Sixth Form Transition Co-ordinator for students not taking up a place in our Sixth Form.
- Key Stage 5: The Sixth Form Transition Co-ordinator meets with any Year 12 student who is an 'in-year' leaver and the 'Skills for Growth' provider also comes into school to help these Level 2 students with CV writing and interview skills. At any time during Key Stage 5, students can request an independent careers interview with the 'Prospects' Careers advisor. All Year 12 students complete a one-week Work Experience placement and complete preparation and follow-up work, accordingly. The Sixth Form Enrichment Programme also allows students to take up voluntary work or work placements and gain credits for doing so.

## **4) A curriculum that is implemented through Blackfen's growth mindset teaching philosophy and practice**

One of the distinctive features of teaching at Blackfen School is that all teachers have been trained in the philosophy and principles of growth mindset. The school has focused on the language that teachers use to praise students and to provide feedback, as well as how students should respond to feedback. Teachers are aware of the power of 'yet' and are encouraged to design learning that is challenging, so that students are placed 'in the pit'. Students are urged to embrace academic challenge by taking **PRIDE** in their learning: '**P**ositivity', '**R**esilience', '**I**ntrospection', '**D**etermination' and '**E**ffort' are the key words that are used with students to enable them to develop growth mindset attitudes to learning and in life.

Teachers' own growth mindset attitudes to professional learning have underpinned their conscientious development and delivery of our curriculum. All teaching staff participate in a carefully planned whole-school professional development programme which blends reflection, review and learning new pedagogy and practice. In this academic year, the theme of the professional development programme is using the basic teaching skills of Challenge, Explanation, Modelling, Practice, Feedback and Questioning to get students' learning habits back on track after two periods of national lockdown and restricted access to school. We aim to invite education professionals to lead some of these sessions, so that our teachers receive the very best training and continue to deliver our curriculum with imagination and proficiency.

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## PROCEDURES

Our curriculum is implemented in the following structures:

- **Curriculum implementation for SEND students**

'Jigsaw' and 'Phoenix' are the school's specialised provision for selected SEND and vulnerable students. In the curriculum structure of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, the school's 'Jigsaw' provision supports students with speech and language difficulties and who are significantly below the Key Stage 2 score of 100 marks on entry in Year 7. As part of their Year 7 induction, 'Jigsaw' students or other students with specific learning needs, 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.

Year 7 students performing under the KS2 test score threshold of 100 marks are grouped together in Mathematics sets. Their curriculum is specifically designed to help them close the gap on their peers' attainment in Year 7. They use additional resources such as a lesson with "MathsWhizz" once a fortnight. 'Jigsaw' provides timetabled specialist provision in the Oasis Centre and elsewhere, to help students to develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills via Entry Level qualifications in English, Mathematics and Science. "#Bounce" is open to all students with a Key Stage 2 test score in Reading and/or Mathematics of below 100 marks on entry to Blackfen School in Year 7. This programme is run by staff with 6th form support in small groups and starts after the October half term break. The students work on English skills, initially, via a group reading venture and then on tasks set by staff on literacy practice. Key Stage 4 students requiring additional professional input, for example, for behavioural or emotional issues, are able to work with support from staff in 'Phoenix', in order to follow a bespoke and/or a reduced number of subjects.

- **Key Stage 3 Curriculum and structure**

Key Stage 3 is made up of all students in Year 7 to Year 9, who study the full range of the Key Stage 3 national curriculum offer of 17 subjects, over three years. Each year group in Key Stage 3 is split in half and both halves are made up of an equal number of mixed ability students. Based on parental preference, students in the 'P' half study Spanish and students in the 'Q' half study French. There are eight teaching groups across each year group, with four teaching groups in each half, except in Technology, where students are split into 12 groups. Within each half year group, English, Mathematics and Science are timetabled at the same time, so that students can be set in different ways by their ability. In the remaining teaching groups in each year half, a 'top' set is created and the other three sets are mixed-ability.

- **Key Stage 4 Curriculum and structure**

Year 10 and Year 11 students are divided into the 'X' pathway (made up of four classes in each core subject) and 'Y' pathway (made up of five classes in each core subject). Students in the 'X' pathway have higher average point scores across English and Mathematics based on their Key Stage 2 test scores and internal end-of-year assessments, than students in the 'Y' pathway. The creation of 'X' and 'Y' pathways in Key Stage 4 reduces class sizes across the year groups and enables curriculum learning to be increasingly tailored for particular groups of students.

At Key Stage 4, most students study ten GCSE qualifications or equivalent: a core platform of GCSE English Language, Literature, Mathematics and Combined Science; a mini-selection between GCSE Religious Studies and GCSE Citizenship; and then four other subject selections. We recognise the Department of Education's EBacc ambition within the context of individual student capability, and so one of these four other subject selections has to be either History, Geography, French, Spanish or Triple

Science. Students are also given the opportunity to take their heritage language as an additional language qualification, when they are ready, which may be before the end of Year 11.

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## • Key Stage 5 Curriculum and structure

All Year 11 students are offered a place in our Sixth Form. Students who do not meet the selection criteria for Level 3 courses are offered a bespoke Level 2 package, which includes the ability to retake GCSE English and/or GCSE Mathematics, if they do not achieve Grade 4 in these GCSE examinations. These students also study the BTEC Level 2 package, which includes BTEC qualifications in 'Public Services', 'Law and Legal' and 'Work Skills'.

Most of our Level 3 students study three Level 3 courses, across 4 blocks, although some students may study four Level 3 qualifications. Each subject has 10 lessons per fortnight. All Level 3 students have an entry requirement of attaining at least Grade 4 or Grade 5 in GCSE English Language. The Level 3 curriculum transitions into the Year 13 curriculum across four blocks and, in one block, there is still a GCSE Mathematics class for any Level 3 student who needs to re-take this qualification. The Extended Project Qualification is also offered, as appropriate and is supported through to its completion.

## 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, Teaching, Learning and Assessment):** 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 (Outcomes):** To quality assure curriculum intervention strategies relating to student outcomes.
- **DHT/AHTs (SENCO):** To quality assure curriculum provision and intervention strategies relating to SEND students.
- **Faculty / 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.

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- Parents: 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**

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