

# Belfast Model School for Girls

## *Achievement for All*



### Curriculum Policy

**Agreed by Board of Governors: June 2011 To be reviewed: June 2014**

## Rationale

The curriculum is the major vehicle through which pupils learn in school. The school aims state that we strive, “to promote an interest in and enjoyment of learning for life”. To achieve this we offer a relevant and stimulating curriculum within the current statutory guidelines. Our school curriculum is a dynamic system with an emphasis on improving curricular opportunities to maintain relevancy, pupil enthusiasm and enjoyment and high standards of achievement.

## Purposes

Our School curriculum:

- takes cognizance of current Department of Education (DE) and CCEA guidelines and the requirements of the examination boards of choice
- aims to produce confident young people who can learn independently and collaboratively
- concentrates on the learning of knowledge, skills and appropriate attitudes, in line with DE guidelines
- contributes to the overall success of the school by helping to raise pupil achievement
- addresses the needs of pupils and the wider community
- strives to ensure personal and academic achievement for pupils of all ages, abilities and interests
- emphasises the importance of developing responsible citizens
- seeks to provide pupils with the required cross-curricular core skills (ICT, Using Mathematics and Communication) and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.
- seeks to respond positively and creatively to changing demands from pupils, parents, the government, employers etc
- is responsive to changes in the local, regional, national, continental and global contexts

## Guidelines

### Key Stage 3

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is organised under the guidelines of the NI Curriculum. All the required Learning Areas, Learning for Life and Work, Cross-Curricular Core skills and the wider skills and capabilities are offered to all pupils. Decision-making is channelled through the curriculum core team chaired by the Vice Principal (Curriculum) and the core team “buddy” groups. This system provides opportunities for discussion across disciplines and promotes the sharing of good practice.

All pupils study subjects in the following Areas of Learning: the Arts, English, Environment & Society, Mathematics, Modern Languages, Physical Education, Science & Technology and Religious Education. Courses in ICT and Learning for Life and Work are also offered. At selected points during KS3 pupils are offered opportunities to engage in collaborative cross-curricular and thematic projects. All subjects are required to integrate the cross curricular core skills and thinking skills and personal capabilities into their teaching and learning strategies and provide appropriate evidence in their schemes of work.

All Year 10 pupils are fast tracked for ICT and all will have the opportunity to attain least one GCSE in ICT at the end of KS3.

Pupils are organised into broad ability bands and the allocation of pupils to particular bands is reviewed at the end of each school year.

### **Key Stage 4**

The transition from Key Stage 3 to 4 is organised by the Vice-Principal (Curriculum) assisted by other key personnel. Pupils are streamed into 3 bands according to their performance in Y10 exams and the curriculum offer varies accordingly. Band 1 takes an academic curriculum, Band 2 takes a mixed academic/vocational curriculum and Band 3 has a discrete curriculum with some opportunities for pupils to select subjects from the wider curriculum.

The school is charged with addressing the demands of the Entitlement Framework by 2013 and to this end the Vice-Principal (Curriculum) participates in the North Belfast Area Learning Community with a view to developing shared courses. The KS4 Curriculum is currently meeting in full the requirements of the Entitlement Framework with at least 1/3 of our courses general and 1/3 applied.

### **Over subscribed courses**

Class size at Key Stage 4 often requires capping. When required, we apply fair, consistent and transparent criteria for selecting those pupils most suited to particular courses. The criteria include effort grades in the Year 10 exams, teachers' comments on Reports, behaviour and pupil attendance in Year 10.

All pupils are working towards GCSEs with a minority of pupils taking a mixed curriculum of GCSEs and certificate level courses. The following subjects are offered at Key Stage 4:

<b>General courses</b>	English, English Literature, Mathematics, Additional Mathematics, Geography, History, French, Spanish, Physical Education, Religious Education, Science (DA & SA), Sociology, Art & Design, Music, Media Stds, Drama
<b>Applied courses</b>	Business & Communication Stds , Child Development, Technology, BTec Travel & Tourism, Performing Arts, ICT (SA & DA), Hairdressing & Beauty, Office Administration, Design & Construction, Digital Technology, Catering, Childcare, Employability, Mathematics (Essential Skills), XL Life Skills

All Key Stage 4 pupils are entered for public examinations in English, Mathematics and ICT and a majority study a further 4 subjects to GCSE or equivalent. In order to respond to the growing demand for a more vocational curriculum we offer alternatives to the traditional academic curriculum. The aim is to enhance pupil motivation through increased enjoyment and opportunities for success. The school will continue to examine worthwhile alternatives to traditional subjects so that all pupils experience a curriculum which suits their abilities, aptitudes and career plans.

At Key Stage 4 pupils are organised into broad ability bands on the basis of attainment in Year 10 examinations and general progress during Year 10. Particular attention is paid to pupil attainment in the core subjects of English and Mathematics.

### **KEY STAGE 5**

Our post 16 curriculum reflects the breadth of ability, interests and aptitudes which exists among our Sixth Form students. Courses are designed to meet the needs of students, further and higher education and employers. Provision is sufficiently diverse to provide flexibility of choice and opportunities for pupils to bridge the academic-vocational divide. Our curriculum offer is enhanced due to our long standing and successful consortium with the Belfast Boys' Model School.

**Courses Offered include:**

AS/A2 general courses: English Literature, Mathematics, Geography, French or Spanish, Sociology, Physical Education, Religious Education, History, Art & Design, Drama, Politics

Applied courses: CACHE L3, Design & Technology, BTec Business, Moving Image Art, BTec Travel & Tourism, Applied Science, Engineering, ICT (SA & DA), Music Technology, COPE (L3), Media Stds, Performing Arts,

ONE YEAR COURSES: Dip. in Bus. Administration, CACHE (Cert. L2)

All pupils also have opportunities to take enrichment courses including:

Physical Education, ECDL, COPE (L2 & L3), Youth Bank, Young Enterprise, School Magazine, Leadership, Survival Cookery, eTwinning

The curriculum also includes Careers Education (including Work Experience) and PSHE.

**North Belfast Learning Area Cluster:** The school is a member of the North Belfast Area Learning Community. Its remit is to devise strategies and opportunities for inter-school collaboration in North Belfast. This initiative aims to increase the post -14 and post -16 curricula and thereby extend choice for pupils. The school takes a proactive part in this group and maintains a positive approach to inter-school collaboration.

***These policy Guidelines are translated into action through other policies and procedures, for example:***

*School Development Plan, Teaching and Learning Policy, Policy for Entry into Post 16 Courses, DE and CCEA guidelines*