

Belfast Royal Academy

per vias sapientiae



Curriculum Policy 2026-27

Title	Curriculum Policy
Summary	Guidance for all stakeholders regarding: The curricular ethos of the School The time-tabled curricula for all Forms
Purpose	To ensure that all Staff are aware of the curriculum followed by each Form, and in particular the possible subject choice options for Forms 3 – M6.
Operational Date	September 2026
Review date	August 2027
Author	Curriculum Vice Principal

To be posted on School website	Yes
Date and version posted (if applicable)	September 2026

1. Rationale:

Belfast Royal Academy aims to enable all pupils to develop their academic potential and interests to the fullest extent. Within this academic ethos, the School aims to give access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which is suited to the abilities and aptitudes of each pupil.

Through the opportunities offered to pupils within the classroom and beyond:

- Knowledge is valued and acquired for its own sake, as a means of understanding the world and to help pupils to know more about themselves and the society in which they live
- Skills and interests are developed in order that pupils might respond effectively to social, economic and political changes and to changing patterns of work and that they might gain personal satisfaction in the use of their leisure time
- Individual autonomy is fostered and individual aptitudes are developed in an environment in which there is equal opportunity in order that pupils might be capable of independent thought and critical analysis and that their self-respect may be enhanced
- Moral standards are encouraged so that pupils have a respect for themselves and others and become responsible members of their community and the environment

The work of the junior and middle Forms will be directed mainly towards the GCSE examinations of CCEA, AQA or OCR, with careful attention being given to the requirements of the universities and the professions. The work of the Sixth Form will be directed mainly towards the GCE Advanced Level examinations of CCEA, AQA, WJEC, OCR or Edexcel.

2. Roles

Curricular provision will be co-ordinated by the Vice-Principal (Curriculum) in consultation with the Quality Assurance Team. To ensure that the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum are met, and to promote sustainable development, the School's curricular provision will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Quality Assurance Team and audited by the Vice-Principal (Curriculum) during each 3 year cycle of the SDP to establish the breadth of provision of the curriculum and that it is in line with the needs of our pupils, society and the economy of Northern Ireland.

The Vice-Principal (Curriculum) is responsible for leading the timetabling team by overseeing the construction of the timetable. This enables the effective delivery of the curriculum across all year groups and the efficient processing of subject choice options at the end of Form 2 and the end of Key Stages 3 and 4.

Subject Leaders are responsible for the production of the annual Departmental Review which incorporates a departmental self-evaluation in line with the School Development Plan identifying three specific and strategic Areas for Improvement annually. These are reviewed at the beginning of the Autumn term each year at a meeting involving the Subject Leader, the Vice-Principal (Curriculum), SLT link (if available), Principal and a member of the Board of Governors. Subject Leaders are also responsible for ensuring that appropriate Schemes of Work are in place and implemented by all teaching staff. Under the direction of Subject Leaders, subject teachers deliver these schemes of work ensuring that pupils are given the opportunity to gain their best possible experience and outcomes whilst providing engaging and interactive lessons. Teachers use a range of strategies to deliver the curriculum depending on the needs of the group and individuals within it. The balance of approaches and the actual approaches used reflects pupil needs, interests and abilities to ensure that there are no

barriers to learning and achieving. The range of strategies includes whole school teaching, differentiated groupings, paired and small group teaching, individual timetables when required and flexible learning opportunities including remote learning.

Head of Year and Class Tutors monitor pupils' academic progress, attendance, behaviour and wellbeing.

3. Organisation of the Curriculum

The School operates a two-week timetable and an outline of a school day within this structure is as follows:

Monday – Friday			Tuesday	
8.40	Registration		8.40	Registration/Assembly 1
8.55 – 10.00	Period 1		9.10	Assembly 2/Registration
10.00 – 11.05	Period 2		9.40 – 10.35	Period 2
11.05 – 11.20	BREAK		10.35 – 10.50	BREAK
11.20 – 12.25	Period 3		10.50 – 11.45	Period 3
12.25 – 13.05	LUNCH		11.45 – 12.40	Period 4
13.05 – 14.05	Period 4		12.40 – 13.20	LUNCH
14.05 – 15.10	Period 5		13.20 – 14.15	Period 5

Pupils finish classes at 2.15 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon to allow those pupils who have been identified through the Raising Achievement programme to engage in additional study or subject specific therapy sessions and to allow for Staff Development time. The Raising Achievement programme is set out in detail in the Raising Achievement handbook.

In summary, the overall strategy is the effective use of data from tracking assessments to sharpen the focus on the key gaps in pupils' learning, and then the implementation of specific personalised intervention for each pupil to enhance standards. This is achieved through a cycle of diagnosis, therapy and testing and is essentially a cohesive formalised Assessment for Learning approach across a department and the whole school. Pupil specific interventions and coaching may be utilised to establish and address root causes of underachievement.

Pupils have a School Assembly once a week and weekly Form Assemblies and assemblies follow a theme set out in the pastoral calendar.

4. Curriculum Content

Throughout the School, Religious Studies will be on a non-denominational basis.

CURRICULUM FOR FORMS 1 – 3

FORM 1	FORM 2	FORM 3
English	English	English
Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
French	French	French
Latin	Latin	History
History	German	Geography
Geography	Spanish	Biology
Biology	History	Chemistry
Chemistry	Geography	Physics
Physics	Biology	Design & Technology
Design & Technology	Chemistry	Art & Design
Art & Design	Physics	Music
Music	Design & Technology	Religious Education
Religious Education	Art & Design	ICT
ICT	Music	LLW
LLW	Religious Education	PE and Swimming
Home Economics	ICT	Games
LORIC	LLW	Tutorial
PE and Swimming	Home Economics	
Games	Drama	
Tutorial	PE and Swimming	
	Games	
	Tutorial	
		+ optional Spanish German Home Economics Computing Drama Technology Business Studies Latin

CURRICULUM FOR FORMS 4 AND 5

The School offers 25 subjects at GCSE Level. Pupils take a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 10 GCSEs, depending on whether or not they take English Literature or Further Mathematics. All pupils take English, Mathematics, Religious Education, at least one modern or classical language and at least one Science subject at Triple Award standard. Some pupils may be offered the opportunity to take Single Award Science as their Science subject depending on the ability of the school to provide this class. Pupils then choose 3 other subjects from the subject choice blocks. Learning for Life and Work is not taken as a GCSE.

CORE SUBJECTS

ENGLISH
ENGLISH LITERATURE (most pupils take this subject)
MODERN OR CLASSICAL LANGUAGE
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
MATHEMATICS
FURTHER MATHEMATICS (approximately one third of pupils take this subject)
LLW

Non-GCSE subjects taken by all pupils are PE and Games (Form 4) and Games (Form 5), and LLW, which includes the three strands: Personal Development, Citizenship and Employability. Pupils in **Form 5** have a dedicated Careers period, and a dedicated Study Skills period.

The table below gives the full list of the 25 subjects *currently* offered at GCSE*

Subject Title (Awarding Body)

Art and Design (CCEA)	Further Mathematics (CCEA)
Biology (CCEA)	Geography (CCEA)
Business Studies (CCEA)	German (CCEA)
Chemistry (CCEA)	History (CCEA)
Computer Science (AQA)	Latin (OCR)
Design and Technology (CCEA)	Mathematics (CCEA)
Digital Technology (CCEA)	Music (CCEA)
Drama (AQA)	Physical Education (CCEA)
Economics (CCEA)	Physics (CCEA)
English (CCEA)	Religious Education (AQA)
English Literature (CCEA)	Single Award Science (CCEA)
Food and Nutrition (CCEA)	Spanish (CCEA)
French (CCEA)	

*OCN French, Business Communications Systems will be offered to F4 pupils (2024 – 2026)

The following conditions apply to the selection of GCSE options:

- Decisions regarding subjects and option choices will be made on an individual basis following the GCSE Subject Choice information evening usually held in November of Form 3. Pupils are encouraged to speak to a member of the Careers Department and subject teachers in advance of making the final choice;
- Pupil performance alongside professional judgement will be taken into account at KS3 therefore pupil performance is essential throughout the Key Stage;
- The School cannot guarantee that the timetable will accommodate every combination of choices hence pupils and parents are asked to select reserve options and every effort will be made to timetable a reserve option, where possible. If we are unable to accommodate an original subject choice, the Vice-Principal (Curriculum) will endeavour to communicate with pupils and parents so that a decision can be made about which of the reserve options should be selected. In the event that a reserve option is not acceptable, then the process of subject selection and timetabling will have to begin again in the full knowledge that class sizes could now be at their maximum and access to subjects curtailed as a consequence. It is therefore advisable that all pupils enter sound reserve options at the beginning of the process.
- The Mathematics Department will advise pupils regarding the choice of Further Mathematics as a GCSE subject. Other than in exceptional circumstances, only those pupils who are in the top third of the year group, will have the option to study Further Mathematics;
- Class sizes in Physical Education, Technology, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Music, Art and Home Economics are capped, as prescribed in the DENI Circular 2016/11;
- When pupils and parents request changes to choices after the options process has been completed, the School cannot guarantee that these changes can be made, particularly when the requested changes would increase class sizes.

SIXTH FORM CURRICULUM

General entry requirements to Sixth Form and an outline of the curricular offer available to individual pupils are provided in the Sixth Form options booklet issued on an annual basis. Subject specific requirements are also outlined in the Sixth Form options documentation. This can be found on our subject choice website <https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/belfastroyalacademy-subjects/home> and in the Admissions Policy for Sixth Form. Decisions regarding subjects and options choices will be made on an individual basis following the Sixth Form Options Information Evening normally held in December of Form 5. For all pupils, this is reviewed in August following the publication of the public examination results as pupils must meet subject specific criteria to gain entry to their chosen subject.

The School cannot guarantee that the timetable will accommodate every combination of choices. In the event that a subject is oversubscribed, the School reserves the right to enhance subject specific criteria.

The viability of a course, based on staffing and pupil numbers, will also be considered when deciding whether or not to offer it in a particular year.

All pupils in Lower Sixth study 3 or 4 subjects to AS level and most continue with 3 subjects in Middle Sixth to the full A Level qualification. A number of pupils continue with 4 subjects to A2 Level. About 15 pupils complete their GCE Mathematics in one year, and a small number of these pupils may complete 5 A Levels by the end of the Sixth Form.

In their Lower Sixth Year, pupils have the option of some enrichment courses including choir, work experience in local primary schools or other voluntary work. In addition, all pupils have a tutorial period

once each week which includes elements of Religious Education and UCAS preparation. Games are optional for pupils in the Sixth Form. Pupils who do not participate in Games have a Study period instead which may include enrichment opportunities.

The table below gives the full list of the 29 subjects offered at AS and A2 (subject to uptake).

Subject Title (Awarding Body)	Subject Title (Awarding Body)
Art and Design (CCEA)	History (CCEA)
Biology (CCEA)	Latin (OCR)
Business Studies (CCEA)	Mathematics (CCEA)
Chemistry (CCEA)	Moving Image Arts (CCEA)
Digital Technology (CCEA)	Music (CCEA)
Drama and Theatre Studies (AQA)	Nutrition and Food Science (CCEA)
Economics (WJEC)	Physical Education (Pearson)
English (AQA)	Physics (CCEA)
English Literature (CCEA)	Psychology (WJEC)
French (CCEA)	Religious Studies (CCEA)
Further Mathematics (CCEA)	Sociology (WJEC)
Geography (CCEA)	Software Systems Development (CCEA)
German (CCEA)	Spanish (CCEA)
Government and Politics (CCEA)	Technology and Design (CCEA)
Health and Social Care (CCEA)	

5. Careers Education/Guidance

The CEIAG programme within the School will reflect the ethos of Preparing for Success (DE Guidance).

A discrete programme of LLW and Careers Education will be delivered under the guidance of the Head of Careers and the Teacher in charge of LLW (see also RSE policies including the Preventative Curriculum). This will be supplemented by careers information provided by individual subject departments.

Individual advice and guidance interviews will be available at key decision making points in Forms 2, 3 and 5. This advice and guidance will be supplemented by DEL interviews. Middle Sixth pupils will be allocated a UCAS mentor and will have individualised advice and guidance throughout the UCAS and CAO application process.

Work-related learning is provided through trips, visits, talks and a Lower Sixth Work Experience programme. The Careers Department also organises a series of mock interviews in conjunction with other schools in the NBALC.

6. Special Educational Needs

All pupils, including those with special educational needs, will be provided with access to the full statutory curriculum and to the full range of extra-curricular activities. If necessary, a risk assessment will be undertaken to ensure pupil safety. The need for reasonable adjustments will be assessed and

implemented in accordance with SENDO legislation. Full details are available in the School's Special Educational Needs Policy.

7. Extra-Curricular Programme

Whilst the classroom remains central to School life, the importance of extra-curricular activities in developing pupil character has always been recognised. The variety of our extra-curricular programme is such that every pupil is sure to find something to inspire them. Music, sport and drama all play an integral part in the pupils' lives, both within the curriculum and beyond. The School has had a long tradition of pupils participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme through the weekly meetings alongside a large number of expeditions outside the School and pupils are encouraged to consider the wider questions of moral accountability, leadership and spirituality.

The ever-changing and expanding list of clubs and societies within the School is a proof of the success of encouraging our pupils to expand their skill set beyond the academic and we highly recommend that all pupils avail the wide range of opportunities provided.