



CURRICULUM POLICY 2025-26

Belfast High School

Date: March 2025

Date Ratified: 28 May 2025

Ratified by: Board of Governors

Responsibility: Board of Governors

Author: Principal

Review Date: March 2026

Rationale

Belfast High School has high expectations for all pupils and encourages them to strive towards and achieve their own personal goals. The curriculum is designed to reflect the following two core aims of the School:

- To provide a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum which suits the needs of all pupils in a changing society and which encourages each pupil in his or her intellectual, cultural, aesthetic and physical development; and
- To prepare our pupils for the challenges and opportunities of the fast-paced C21st world.

In order to meet the needs and aspirations of our pupils, as well as ensuring compliance with all current and anticipated statutory requirements, the School's curriculum offer is reviewed annually and proposed updates are presented for approval at the March meeting of the Education Committee of the Board of Governors each year.

Processes to support learning are as significant as the structure and content of the curriculum in ensuring pupils progress and achieve. These processes are outlined in the School's Learning and Teaching policy.

The School complies fully with all DENI Circulars relating to the delivery of the curriculum. Details on contingency plans for any return to a period of remote learning are outlined in the School's remote learning procedures/protocols.

The Curriculum Policy is implemented and delivered by the Principal and staff of the School.

Roles and Responsibilities

The curriculum provision for the pupils in the School is led by the Principal, working closely with the Senior Leadership Team. To ensure the curriculum meets the needs of our pupils, the curriculum offer is reviewed annually to ensure the highest quality curriculum offer possible, while taking account of all statutory requirements.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team is then responsible for leading the timetabling team by overseeing the construction of the timetable. This work will also take into account the best match for the needs of the pupils with the resources available.

Heads of Department and Subject Leaders are responsible for ensuring the appropriate schemes of work are in place and are followed by all members of the teaching staff delivering the curriculum in their subject(s) across each year group. Schemes of work should be available for all teaching staff in the department and reviewed on an ongoing basis to maintain the highest standards of provision, with engaging lessons delivered in line with the whole school Learning and Teaching policy. Under the direction of the Subject Leaders, teachers deliver the schemes of work using a range of strategies that reflect the interests, abilities and needs of the pupils in each individual class. Heads of Department/Subject Leaders have an assigned Senior Leader link. They work collaboratively to ensure the highest possible learning experiences and outcomes for the pupils, agree strategic priorities and monitor and evaluate the progress of the department.

The School operates a 2-week timetable to accommodate the delivery of the curriculum.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday:

Registration/Assembly	9.10-9.20am
P1	9.25-10.25am
Break	10.25-10.45am
P2	10.45-11.45am
P3	11.50-12.50pm
Lunch	12.50-1.35pm
P4	1.35-2.35pm
P5	2.40-3.40pm

Wednesday:

Registration/P1	9.10-10.05am
Break	10.05-10.20am
P2	10.20-11.20am
P3	11.20-12.20pm
Lunch	12.20-1.05pm
P4	1.05-2.05pm
P5	2.05-3.05pm

Pupils attend a Key Stage assembly once per week, Year assemblies once per fortnight and House assemblies once per term.

KEY STAGE 3 TAUGHT CURRICULUM 2025-26

Subject	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Art and Design	2	2	3*
Biology	2	2	2
Careers			1
Chemistry	2	2	2
Classical Civilisation			3*
Classics		2	
Computing	2	2	3*
Drama	2		3*
English	6	6	6
Form Period	1	1	1
French	4	3+	3*
Games	2	2	2
Geography	3	3	3
German		3+	3*
History	3	3	3
Home Economics	2	2	3*
Latin			3*
Literacy	1		
Learning for Life and Work	1	1	2
Mathematics	6	6	6
Music	2	2	3*
Numeracy	1		
Physical Education	2	2	2
Physics	2	2	2
Spanish		3+	3*
Religious Studies	2	2	3
Technology and Design	2	2	3*

* In Year 10 pupils select one modern language from French, German and Spanish and 4 subjects chosen from Art, Classical Civilisation, Computing, French, German, Home Economics, Latin, Music, Drama, Spanish and Technology and Design.

+ in Year 9 pupils study 2 modern languages from French, German and Spanish.

At Key Stage 3 pupils have the opportunity to acquire, develop and demonstrate the skills and personal capabilities of the NI Curriculum across the curriculum in ways that are appropriate to each subject area. Discrete time is provided for computing for all pupils in Years 8 and 9 in which pupils follow a programme which develops their skills and competencies in using information and communication technology.

Key Stage 4 Taught Curriculum 2025-26

In Years 11 and 12 pupils prepare for and take their GCSE qualifications.

All Key Stage 4 pupils complete GCSEs in:

English Language, English Literature and Mathematics.

For a broad and balanced curriculum, it is **suggested** that all pupils study one modern language chosen from:

French
German
Spanish

and at least one science chosen from:

Biology
Chemistry
Electronics
Physics

Further Mathematics, Religious Studies and Latin can be taken as additional GCSEs.

We encourage pupils to choose a range of subjects for a broad and balanced curriculum to keep as many future career paths open as possible.

Pupils will also follow the statutory aspects of the Key Stage 4 curriculum: Careers, Employability, Citizenship, Personal Development, PE and Games.

The 27 GCSE subjects offered in 2025-26 curriculum are:

Art and Design	Biology	Business and Communication Systems	Business Studies
Chemistry	Child Development	Classical Civilisation	Computer Science
Drama	Electronics	English Language	English Literature
Food and Nutrition	French	Further Maths	Geography
German	History	Latin	Learning for Life and Work
Mathematics	Music	Physical Education	Physics
Religious Studies	Spanish	Technology and Design	

Selecting Level 2 Options

In Year 10, the process leading to the selection of GCSE subjects begins with a series of careers lessons, which usually includes the use of external providers and Unifrog that provide each pupil with the opportunity to ask questions about the factors to consider when making their subject choices including the impact that they may have on future courses and careers. The lessons cover the future of work, NI Labour Market Information, University requirements, making appropriate choices and useful sources of additional information. Pupils use this information along with their Year 10 Winter report and feedback from their subject teacher consultations with their parents/carers to make an initial choice of GCSE subjects. Choices are then reviewed and agreed at a meeting with each individual pupil, their parent/carer and a member of the Careers Department or member of SLT. A Subject Information Booklet is issued annually.

The following conditions apply to the selection of GCSE subjects:

The School will commit to drawing up option blocks based on the selections of the pupils in the Year 10 cohort each year. The School will do everything possible to accommodate each pupil's choices in full, but as this cannot be an absolute guarantee, each pupil and their parents/carers are asked to select a reserve option. Where the first set of choices cannot be accommodated the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team will liaise with the pupil and their parents/carers.

Final decisions on GCSE Further Maths are made by the School on the advice of the Mathematics department and in consultation with the pupils and their parents/carers before the end of the timetabling process.

Class sizes in practical subjects are determined in line with the DE Circular 2016/11.

Where pupils and parents/carers request changes after the options process has been completed, the School will consider the request but cannot guarantee that any changes can be made.

Sixth Form 2025-26

Entry requirements to sixth form are outlined in the Sixth Form Admissions Policy which is available on the School website. A Sixth Form Options Booklet, outlining subject specific requirements, is issued annually.

Each Year 12 pupil has one dedicated Careers lesson every 2 weeks in Year 12 which considers the range of pathways open to them at post-16 level. The programme covers future workplaces, NI Labour Market Information, University courses, choosing subjects and useful careers websites. External speakers and visits and the careers platform Unifrog are key parts of these lessons. They are also offered a one to one meeting with the Careers Service.

Each pupil attends an individual meeting with a member of the Careers Department or the Senior Leadership Team to discuss their plans post-GCSE, including A Level subject choices. Parents/carers are also invited to attend these meetings which take place via School Cloud. A Level subjects should be chosen carefully with future career paths in mind. Option blocks for timetabling are drawn up following these meetings to maximise the number of pupils receiving their first choice of subjects. The School cannot guarantee that every combination will be accommodated, but if a subject does not run in a particular year then the pupil and their parent/carer will be contacted to discuss their reserve choice and the other options available.

For those pupils returning to school to complete A Levels their A Level choices are reviewed following the publication of results by a member of the senior leadership team in late August.

Every pupil who is offered a place in Sixth Form will follow a minimum of 3 A Level subjects. In addition to the 3 or 4 subjects studied for A Level, pupils will have a timetabled Careers lesson, Games lessons, supervised study sessions and a number of enrichment opportunities eg Young Enterprise, visits to primary schools, learning mentors, assistant prefect or other voluntary activities.

The 26 A Level subjects offered in 2025-26 are:

Art and Design	Biology	Business Studies	Chemistry
Classical Civilisation	Computer Science	Drama	Electronics
English Literature	French	Further Maths	Geography
German	Government and Politics	Health and Social Care	History
Latin	Mathematics	Media Studies	Music
Nutrition and Food Science	Physical Education	Physics	Religious Studies
Spanish	Technology and Design		

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

Careers education enables pupils to learn about their own skills, attributes and interests, supports pupils during crucial decision-making processes and provides numerous opportunities for them to learn about potential careers and the world of work.

At Key Stage 3 the focus is on developing our pupils' knowledge and skills of the world of work and their self-awareness to help inform them on subject choices as they begin to shape their future. In Year 10 all pupils and their parents/carers are offered one-to-one interviews to assist them in making well-informed decisions about their son/daughter's GCSE subject choices.

At Key Stage 4 pupils build on the foundations that they laid at Key Stage 3, preparing for their post-GCSE pathway. In Year 12, in addition to individual one-to-one interviews, all pupils receive a careers guidance meeting with a careers advisor from the Department of the Economy.

In Sixth Form the focus moves to preparing our pupils for career pathways beyond school. All pupils participate in a rigorous interview skills programme and have the opportunity to carry out work experience. Universities and employers from the UK, Ireland and further afield are invited to discuss the opportunities they can provide and Sixth Form pupils attend university open days.

The Careers Department works closely alongside a number of external agencies to support pupils. To help ensure the highest quality CEIAG for our pupils, the School has also invested in the online platform Unifrog which gives our pupils access to the latest careers information on undergraduate courses and apprenticeships and the opportunity to study abroad all in one place. Unifrog also provides a facility for pupils to complete UCAS applications, draft CVs and build up their individual profiles of their own skills and qualities. Feedback from pupils, staff and parents/carers has been very positive since the introduction of this key resource.

Parents/carers are welcome to attend individual Careers interviews and are invited to attend the Key Stage 4 and 5 Parent Information sessions, during which important Careers information is presented, in order to ensure that they are fully informed and able to support their child.

Co-Curricular Programme

The School offers a thriving extra and co-curricular programme to our pupils. Participating in these activities provides pupils with a wealth of ways to broaden their horizons, develop new skills, meet new people and enjoy a rich and full experience of school life.

The aim is that the variety of the programme will ensure that every pupil will find something to appeal to them and we strongly recommend that all our pupils engage as fully as possible in the range of opportunities on offer.

The draft programme for 2025-26 will be finalised in the summer term 2025 and is likely to include over 50 activities from:

SPORT

THE ARTS

STEM

WELLNESS

HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES