



BALLYMENA ACADEMY

EST. 1828

Curriculum Policy

Policy ratified by Board of Governors: September 2025
Date of next Review: September 2026

1. Aim

To provide a curriculum for all of our young people which:

- fulfils statutory requirements;
- is characterised by breadth, balance, coherence, relevance, and progression;
- is responsive to the needs of the individual and society.

2. Objectives

The curriculum provided by Ballymena Academy is designed to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils, and to enable them to:

- experience school as a caring supportive community where life is enjoyable and where there is equal provision regardless of their gender, race or culture;
- develop as fully as possible their abilities, interests and aptitudes;
- have provision, if necessary, should they be identified as having Special Educational Needs;
- develop lively enquiring minds, to be capable of independent thought, and to experience enjoyment in learning so that they may be encouraged to take advantage of educational opportunities in later life;
- develop appropriate skills and capabilities in Literacy and Numeracy;
- develop appropriate skills and capabilities in Communication, Using Mathematics, I.C.T., Managing Information, Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision-Making, Being Creative, Self-Management, Working with Others;
- have access to those major areas of knowledge and experience which will help them to know more about themselves and the society in which they live;
- work in ways which will enhance their self-respect and confidence so that they may be encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and their activities;
- develop understanding of the wider community and of the ways in which individuals and groups relate;
- gain the skills necessary to respond effectively to social, economic and political changes, and to changing patterns of work;
- develop the social skills necessary to work successfully with other people;
- be equipped for their adult roles in society so that they understand the responsibilities of being parents, citizens and consumers;
- appreciate and be concerned for the environment;
- develop interests and skills which will continue to give personal satisfaction in the use of leisure time.

3. Learning

Learning processes are as significant as curriculum content in determining progress and achievement. Learning should be experienced as enjoyable, engaging, rewarding and confidence-building.

In this school, there is an ongoing extensive programme designed to promote learning and achieve stated curriculum objectives as defined in the School's Learning and Teaching Policy – Stage 0 'Ballymena Academy Procedures for Classroom Management: Promoting Positive Behaviour'.

All Learning Areas have parity of esteem and are impartially promoted. Every effort is made, within the constraints of finance, personnel, time-table and appropriate demand, to make adequate provision for them.

4. The Curriculum

An overview of the curriculum provision in Ballymena Academy is provided in Appendix 1.

The school meets the statutory requirements of the Entitlement Framework, providing access to a minimum of 21 courses post-16 and G.C.S.E., at least one third of which are Applied, and one third of which are General.

Key Stage 3

Years 8 – 10 N.I. Curriculum [Appendix 2]

In order to meet the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum the school provides learning opportunities in relation to the following:-

- (a) Religious Education is in accordance with the core syllabus drafted by the four main Christian Churches in Northern Ireland and specified by the Department of Education.
- (b) The following Areas of Learning:-

Area of Learning

Contributory Elements

The Arts

Art and Design
Drama
Music

Environment and Society

Geography
History

Language and Literacy

English
Media Education

Learning for Life and Work

Employability
Local and Global Citizenship
Personal Development
Home Economics

Mathematics and Numeracy

Mathematics
Financial Capability

Modern Languages

French
German
Spanish

Physical Education

Physical Education and Games

Science and Technology

Science
Technology and Design

(c) Cross-Curricular Skills

Communication
Using Mathematics
Using Information and Communications
Technology

(d) Other Skills

Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision-Making
Self-Management
Working with Others
Managing Information
Being Creative

Skills and Personal Capabilities (Years 8 – 10)

Pupils have an opportunity to acquire, develop and demonstrate the skills listed in (c) and (d) across the curriculum in ways which are appropriate to the content and methodology of individual areas of learning and subject strands. In Year 8, pupils experience project-based learning, and also have the opportunity to take a 'taster' course in Mandarin and Chinese Culture Studies.

Discrete time is provided for Digital Technology in Years 8, 9 and 10, in which pupils follow a programme which develops skills competence in a way which complements and enhances skills development and application in other learning areas/subject strands. ICT is also delivered across the curriculum.

Languages

All pupils have the opportunity to study French, German and Spanish in Year 8 through a modular carousel structure. In Years 9 and 10, pupils study two Modern Languages of the three. Occasionally pupils, on the recommendation of the Curriculum Care, Support and Guidance Team, participate in a Learning Support Programme, instead of taking a second Modern Language, which focuses on literacy and numeracy skills development.

Key Stage 4 Year 11/12 Curriculum Structure [Appendix 3]:

Year 11

The school meets the statutory requirements of The Education Order (N.I.) 2007, by providing learning opportunities in relation to:-

- (a) Religious Education, in accordance with the core syllabus drafted by the four main Christian Churches in Northern Ireland and specified by the Department of Education.
- (b) The following Areas of Learning:-

- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Modern Languages
- The Arts
- Environment and Society
- Science and Technology
- Learning for Life and Work
- Physical Education

Skills and Capabilities

Pupils will have the opportunity to develop their skills competence:-

- Communication, Using Mathematics through the study of G.C.S.E. English and Mathematics, respectively.
- Self-Management, Problem Solving and Working with Others through all courses taken at K.S.4.
- Throughout K.S.4 pupils will have an opportunity in a range of subjects to make effective use of I.C.T. in a wide range of contexts to access, manage, select and present information, including mathematical information.

In K.S.4 pupils take a compulsory core of subjects (period allocation is per fortnight):-

- Games (4 periods)
- P.E. (2 periods in year 11 / 3 periods in year 12)
- Mathematics (9 periods)
- Religious Studies and Learning for Life and Work - (4 periods).
- A Science option (9 periods)
- Careers Education (1 period)

Pupils select additional subjects from a range of options and normally take a minimum of 9 G.C.S.E., or equivalent, courses in total.

The school uses the subject specifications of CCEA unless there are compelling reasons to use those of other Boards.

Pupils will generally be entered for examinations at the Higher Tier of Entry. Where this is considered not to be in the best interests of the pupil, the student and his/her parents will be consulted before any change is made to the tier of entry.

Sixth Form [Appendix 4]

The Sixth Form programme is composed of Advanced Level subjects comprising 'AS'/A2 units, BTEC and CTEC third level qualifications, and enrichment opportunities. Pupils have access to a wide range of co-curricular enrichment opportunities, for example, as a Peer Mentor or Learning Mentors, as a member of the Sixth Form Committee, Charity Committee, Cancer Research Committee, as a Prefect, through sports participation and/or involvement in the vast array of recreational, cultural, social, business and environmental activities.

The school uses the subject specifications of CCEA unless there are compelling reasons to use those of other Boards.

Requests for Subject Change

Before requesting a change of subject, the pupil should discuss the matter with his/her Head of Year, subject teacher, parents and Careers Adviser. If it is agreed that a change should be further explored, the Head of the Careers Department will provide guidance and recommendations to speak to the relevant Heads of Department. The request to change subjects should be made in a formal letter from parents outlining the reasons for the request. The request will be considered by the Head of Year, the Head of Careers in consultation with the Curriculum Development Advisory Group. If the change of subject is granted, the pupil must ensure that the Change of Subject Request Form is completed in full and returned to the Head of the Careers Department.

In order to ensure that decisions regarding requests for subject change are in the best interests of the pupil, each request will be assessed individually taking various factors into consideration, for example the timing of the request, the reasons given for requesting the change, the views of the pupil's teacher(s), Head of Year and the relevant Heads of Department, the pupil's academic, attendance and behaviour record, the pupil's career plans etc. The request is also considered in the light of timetabling constraints.

Careers Education and Guidance

The CEIAG programme will reflect the ethos of Preparing for Success (DE Guidance). A discrete programme of employability is provided at Key Stage 3 and 4. A Careers Education Programme is delivered by a careers team in Years 10, 12, 13 and 14 under the leadership of the Head of the Careers Department.

Individual guidance interviews are provided at key transition points : Year 10, 12, 14. This is supplemented by DEL interviews.

Work related learning is provided through a Year 13 Work Shadowing programme. A range of work-related opportunities are provided through events and trips across a range of subjects.

5. Management and Development

5.1 Curriculum Development Advisory Committee (C.D.A.C.)

Membership: Principal, Deputy Principal and Vice-Principals.

Role: To prioritise, plan, monitor, and evaluate all curricular and cross-curricular initiatives.

To make recommendations to the S.L.T.

5.2 Head of Department Committee

- Membership: Vice-Principal Curriculum (Chair), Heads of Department,
Heads of Subject, Subject Co-ordinators.
- Role: Appraisal and development of curriculum, learning and teaching.

5.2 Assessment, Recording, Reporting Committee (See Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy)

- Membership: Senior Teacher (Chair), representatives from Areas of Learning,
Representatives from Head of Year Committee.
- Role: To make recommendations to the S.L.T. on implementing
assessment, recording and reporting procedures.

5.3 Liaison and external agencies

The school avails itself of opportunities provided for training and curriculum support provided by DENI, CCEA (and other relevant examination boards), and also the Education Authority.

5.4 Senior Leadership Team (S.L.T.)

All matters relating to the management and development of the curriculum must be ratified by the S.L.T. before implementation.

6. Policy Review

This policy will be kept under review annually.

APPENDIX 1

Curricular Programme Details

The school operates a 9 x 35-minute period teaching day, Monday to Friday, as follows:

8.55 - 9.00	:	Registration
9.00 - 9.15	:	Tutor Groups
9.05 - 9.15	:	Assemblies
9.15 - 9.50	:	Period 1
9.50 - 10.25	:	Period 2
10.25 - 11.00	:	Period 3 Years 11,12 & 14
10.25 - 10.40	:	Break - Years 8 -10 &13
10.40 - 11.15	:	Period 3 – Years 8 -10 &13
11.00 - 11.15	:	Break - Years 11, 12 &14
11.15 - 11.50	:	Period 4
11.50 - 12.25	:	Period 5
12.25 - 1.00	:	Period 6 (lunch for Years 10, 11 & 13)
1.00 - 1.35	:	Period 7 (lunch for Years 8 & 9)
1.35 - 2.10	:	Period 8 (lunch for Years 12 & 14)
2.10 - 2.45	:	Period 9
2.45 - 3.20	:	Period 10

As a general rule, classes circulate to teachers based in their subject rooms.
Numbers in brackets below indicate period allocation per fortnight.

Key Stage 3 (Years 8, 9, 10)

Year 8: All pupils study English & Media Education (12), Drama (2), Mathematics, including Financial Capability (12) Science (8), Technology (4), Home Economics (4), History (6), Geography (6), P.E./Games (8), Art and Design (4), Music (4), French / German / Spanish (8 modular carousel), Religious Education (4), Learning for Life and Work (4), Digital Technology (4).

Year 9: All pupils study English with Media Education (8), Drama (2), Mathematics including Financial Capability (8), Science (12) [taught separately as Biology (4), Chemistry (4) and Physics (4)], Technology (4), Home Economics (4), History (6), Geography (6), P.E./Games (8), Art and Design (4), Music (4), Religious Education (4) two from French, German, Spanish ^ (14) Digital Technology (4), Learning for Life and Work (2).

^ some pupils may take a Learning Support Programme instead of a second modern language

Year 10: All pupils study English with Drama (12), Mathematics including Financial Capability (11), Science (12) [taught separately as Biology (4), Chemistry (4) and Physics (4)], Technology (4), Home Economics (4), Careers Education (1), History (6), Geography (6), P.E./Games (6), Art and Design (3), Music (3), Religious Education (4), two from French, German or Spanish^ (12), Learning for Life and Work (2), Digital Technology (4)

^ some pupils may take a Learning Support Programme instead of a second modern language

DENI specified intake number determines class sizes. In each of Years 8 and 9 there are usually 6 classes of 29 or 30, for Mathematics, Languages, History, Geography, Learning for Life and Work, R.E. and 8 classes of 22 or 23 in the remaining “practical” subjects, Art and Design, Drama, Home Economics, Digital Technology, Music, Physical Education, Science and Technology. In Year 10, there are 7 classes of 29 or 30, for Mathematics, Languages, History, Geography, Learning for Life and Work, R.E. and 9 classes of 22 or 23 in the remaining “practical” subjects, Art and Design, Drama, Home Economics, Digital Technology, Music, Physical Education, Science and Technology.

Key Stage 4 (An asterisk indicates a core subject.)

All pupils study Learning for Life and Work/Careers Education/Religious Education*, Games and Physical Education*, Mathematics*, and English Language* plus Drama, English Literature, Media Studies or Religious Studies. This enables 3 GCSE, or equivalent, courses (underlined) to be taken.

The Science* option must also be selected:

- Either** Single Award (1 GCSE) which allows 5 further optional subjects to be taken;
- or** Double Award (2 GCSEs) which allows 4 further optional subjects to be taken;
- or** One of Biology, Chemistry, Physics which allows 5 further optional subjects to be taken;
- or** Two of Biology, Chemistry, Physics which allows 4 further optional subjects to be taken;
- or** Biology and Chemistry and Physics which allows 3 further optional subjects to be taken.

Further optional subjects may be chosen from a range of learning areas :-

Arts / Environment and Society subjects: Art and Design, Business Studies, Classical Civilisation, Drama, English Literature, Geography, History, Media Studies, Music, Religious Studies.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) : Agriculture, Biology, Chemistry, Construction, Digital Technology, Food and Nutrition, Further Mathematics, Occupational Studies, Physical Education, Physics, Technology and Design.

Modern Languages : French, German, Spanish

The above arrangements enable pupils to take either:-

- 9 GCSEs, or
- 8 GCSEs plus a Level 2 qualification in Occupational Studies

Further points:

- It is understood that pupils choosing Science/Single Award will not be able to study 'A' level Science(s).

The Sixth Form (Years 13, 14) Programme

The Sixth Form Programme is composed of Advanced Levels, Level 3 BTEC and CTEC qualifications and an enrichment programme, see below (dependent on subject choice combinations and timetabling). Within Advanced Level study there are 'A' level subjects and Advanced Subsidiary or 'AS' level subjects. BTEC and CTEC Qualifications offered included BTEC and CTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate (equivalent to an 'A' level) and BTEC Level 3 National Diploma (equivalent to 2 'A' levels). All pupils will normally take four subjects at 'AS' or equivalent level in Year 13. In addition, pupils in Year 13 are allocated:-

2 periods per fortnight of Careers Education
4 periods per fortnight of Games.
Study time

Year 14 programmes are as follows:

- 3 x A2 or equivalent courses
- or 4 x A2 or equivalent courses

In addition

2 periods per fortnight of Careers Education
4 periods per fortnight of Games.
Study time

Further points: See Admissions Criteria (2025-2026).

- Entry to the Sixth Form from Year 12 in Ballymena Academy is not automatic.

- some subjects, e.g. Agriculture, Applied Science, Art & Design, Business, Classical Civilisation, Construction, Digital Technology, Economics, Engineering, English Literature, Environmental Technology, Government & Politics, Health and Social Care, History, Media Studies, Music, Nutrition and Food Science, Performing Arts, Physical Education, Religious Studies and Technology & Design may be taken at 'A' level even though the subject was not studied for GCSE, provided interest and ability are evident;
- it is not necessarily an advantage to take 4 'A' Levels and only the most able pupils should consider embarking on a 4 'A' level or 4 A level equivalent programme;
- where a subject is oversubscribed, criteria will be drawn up to enable selection.

'A' Level subjects and Level 3 BTEC qualifications offered are as follows:

Agriculture (BTEC), Applied Science, Art and Design, Biology, Business (CTEC), Chemistry, Classical Civilisation, Construction Single Award (BTEC), Construction Double Award (BTEC), Digital Technology, Economics, Engineering (BTEC), English Literature, Environmental Technology, French, Further Mathematics, Geography, German, Government and Politics, Health and Social Care, History, Mathematics, Media Studies, Music, Nutrition and Food Science, Performing Arts, Physical Education, Physics, Religious Studies, Spanish, Technology and Design.

'AS' Level subjects offered are as above.

Admission policy for Year 14

Admission to Year 14 is not automatic and will be based on pupil's academic attainment, discipline record, attendance. See Admissions Criteria (2025-2026).

APPENDIX 2
Curriculum for Years 8/9 : 2025-2026
 Period allocations shown per fortnight

Area of Learning	Contributory Elements	YEAR 8 Periods	YEAR 9 Periods
Language and Literacy	English and Media Education	12	8
Mathematics and Numeracy	Mathematics including Financial Capability	12	8
The Arts	Art and Design Drama Music	4 2 4	4 2 4
Environment and Society	Geography History	6 6	6 6
Modern Languages	French German Spanish	8 (Modular Carousel)	14 (2 of 3 Languages)
Science and Technology	Science Technology and Design	8 4	12 4
Learning for Life and Work	Home Economics Learning for Life and Work	4 4	4 2
Physical Education	Physical Education and Games	8	8
Religious Education	Religious Education	4	4
Additional Studies	Digital Technology	4	4

JUNIOR SCHOOL (KEY STAGE 3) ORGANISATION

KEY STAGE 3	Eng./Maths/Geog./Hist. / Lang./LLW/ R.E.	Sc./Tech./P.E./Art/ Drama/Music/ Digital Technology/H.E.
YEAR 8	6 groups of 29 or 30	8 groups of 22 or 23
YEAR 9	6 groups of 29 or 30	8 groups of 22 or 23

APPENDIX 2(a)

JUNIOR SCHOOL (KEY STAGE 3) - YEAR 10 CURRICULUM

Period allocations are per fortnight

Area of Learning	Contributory Elements	YEAR 10 Periods
Language and Literacy	English with Drama and Media Education	12
Mathematics and Numeracy	Mathematics including Financial Capability	11
The Arts	Art and Design Music	3 3
Environment and Society	Geography History	6 6
Modern Languages (two)	French German Spanish	6 6 6
Science and Technology	Science Technology and Design	12 4

Learning for Life and Work	Employability Local & Global Citizenship Personal Development	2
	Home Economics	4
Physical Education	Physical Education and Games	6
Religious Education	Religious Education	4
Additional Studies	Careers Education	1
	Digital Technology	4

* Alternate weeks

JUNIOR SCHOOL (KEY STAGE 3) ORGANISATION

KEY STAGE 3	Eng./Maths/Geog./ Hist./ Lang./LLW/ R.E.	Sc./Tech./P.E./Art/Drama Music/Careers/H.E./ Digital Technology
YEAR 10	7 groups of 29 or 30	9 groups of 22 or 23

Classes are generally unstreamed throughout Key Stage 3

APPENDIX 3

MIDDLE SCHOOL (YEARS 11 and 12 – KEY STAGE 4)

CURRICULUM AND ORGANISATION 2025-2027

GCSE SUBJECT CHOICE FORM Name: _____ Careers Adviser: _____ 2025-2027
 9 boxes should be ticked ✓

COMPULSORY CORE SUBJECTS

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

☒ English Language En

CHOOSE ONE

☐ Drama Dr

☐ English Literature Et

☐ Media Studies Ms

☐ Religious Studies Rs

USING MATHEMATICS

☒ Mathematics Ma

CORE AREAS OF STUDY

- Careers Education
- Learning for Life and Work
- Physical Education
- Games
- Religious Studies

SCIENCE

CHOOSE ONE

☐ Single Award Sg

☐ Double Award Ds

☐ Biology Bi

☐ Chemistry Ch

☐ Physics Ph

CHOOSE FIVE SUBJECTS

MODERN LANGUAGES

Preferably at least ONE from this box

☐ French Fr

☐ German Gr

☐ Spanish Sp

ARTS/ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY

Preferably at least ONE from this box

☐ Art & Design Ar

☐ Business Studies Bs

☐ Classical Civilisation Cl

☐ Drama Dr

☐ English Literature Et

☐ Geography Gg

☐ History Hi

☐ Media Studies Ms

☐ Music Mu

☐ Religious Studies Rs

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATHEMATICS

☐ Agriculture & Land Use Ag

☐ Biology Bi

☐ Chemistry Ch

☐ Construction Cd

☐ Digital Technology Dt

☐ Double Award Science 2* Ds

☐ Food & Nutrition Fn

☐ Further Mathematics Fm

☐ Occupational Studies Os

☐ Physical Education Pe

☐ Physics Ph

☐ Technology and Design Tl

Reserve Subject _____

Parental Signature [February] _____

Feb 25 En Ma June 25 En Ma

Parental Signature if choices have changed [June 25] _____

Feb 25 June 25

Subject	Period Allocations per fortnight :-
Physical Education	2 periods Yr. 11 / 2 periods Yr. 12
Games	4 periods
Religious Studies (Short course) / LLW	4 periods
Careers Education	1 period in Yr. 12
Double Award Science	18 periods
Agriculture & Land Use Art & Design Biology Business Studies Chemistry Classical Civilisation Construction Digital Technology Drama English Language English Literature Food and Nutrition French Geography	German History Mathematics Further Mathematics Media Studies Music Occupational Studies Physical Education Physics Religious Studies Science Single Award Spanish Technology and Design

APPENDIX 4

SIXTH FORM PROGRAMME 2025-2027

The Year 13 Programme 2025-2027 is composed of GCE Advanced Subsidiary ('AS' Levels), Level 3 BTEC courses and a minority time programme. It is designed to provide depth and breadth of study.

Pupils take four subjects and the enrichment programme in Year 13. Pupils will select three of these subjects which they intend to continue with in Year 14 - thus completing three full 'A' level or equivalent programmes. The fourth subject will be studied in Year 13 only and taken as an 'AS' level. BTEC qualifications are two years in duration. Some pupils may opt to take all four subjects to 'A' level providing they meet the set criteria. Since the purpose of the structure is to provide a course which has breadth and balance, it is recommended that one of the Year 13 subjects should be in a contrasting discipline.

'A' Level subjects/BTEC/CTEC qualifications are as follows (All subjects are offered dependent on uptake justifying viable classes):-

- | | |
|---|--|
| ◆ Agriculture (BTEC) | Further Mathematics |
| Applied Science | Geography |
| ◆ Art and Design | German |
| Biology | ◆ Government and Politics |
| ◆ Business (CTEC) | ◆ Health and Social Care |
| Chemistry | ◆ History |
| ◆ Classical Civilisation (Linear qualification) | Mathematics |
| ◆ Construction (BTEC Single/Double Award) | ◆ Media Studies (Linear qualification) |
| ◆ Digital Technology | ◆ Music |
| ◆ Economics | ◆ Nutrition and Food Science |
| ◆ Engineering (BTEC) | ◆ Performing Arts |
| ◆ English Literature | ◆ Physical Education |
| ◆ Environmental Technology | Physics |
| French | ◆ Religious Studies |
| | Spanish |
| | Technology & Design |

- ◆ Subjects marked in this way may be taken without previous GCSE study. See subject information for entry requirements.

The Enrichment Programme

Dependent on a pupil's subject combination and timetabling.

This may consist of:

Year 13

2 periods per fortnight of Careers Education.

4 periods per fortnight of Games.

Study Periods

Year 14

2 periods per fortnight of Careers Education.

4 periods per fortnight of Games.

Study Periods

A wide variety of enrichment opportunities are provided through the Co-curricular programme.

Whilst it may be desirable on the part of individual pupils to change their initial decisions regarding A2 subject choices at the end of Year 13, it must be emphasised that this will only be possible within the constraints of time-tabling and the viability of classes. No guarantees can be given.

Please note that as far as the Year 13 programme is concerned, very occasionally minor restrictions in choices may occur, given constraints of time-tabling and the viability of classes. However, every effort is made to accommodate individual pupil choices within the framework presented.