

1. Curriculum Overview

Birkenhead High School Academy aims to prepare its students for adult life by helping them to fulfil their potential in all areas. Each student is encouraged to achieve their personal best. It is of essential importance that knowledge and skills are built upon over time.

The Academy recognises the need for a broad and balanced curriculum that is both engaging and relevant. The curriculum structure is driven by a commitment to delivering educational excellence by providing a range of subjects and opportunities which will create a desire for learning. By the end of their school career students are equipped with the skills, knowledge and values required to be lifelong learners. Birkenhead High School Academy is aware of the vital contribution made by pastoral and Enrichment activities to the development of the whole person. It is important that students are given every opportunity to be part of a team, to take responsibility, to develop a wide range of interests and to be of service to others. All students participate in daily Enrichment activities to develop educational interests and to promote independence and inter-personal links with students in other year groups.

The senior school curriculum has the following aims:

- All students are entitled to a broad, balanced, coherent, relevant and personalised curriculum which meets their individual needs and provides them with appropriate qualifications in the future. This ambitious curriculum is designed to give all of our students, particularly disadvantaged students and students with SEN and or disabilities, the knowledge and cultural literacy they need to succeed in life.
- The learning process should be engaging, motivating, exciting and allow students to achieve, as well as developing lively, imaginative and enquiring minds.
- All students will be given the opportunity to be creative and take risks with their learning, in a supportive yet challenging environment.
- The curriculum should develop active citizens, both within the school and the wider community.
- Students should be well prepared for their future careers through the development of independence of thought, self-reliance and a questioning approach which challenges prejudice.
- The curriculum should encourage high expectations and aspirations.
- Students should develop and retain knowledge (declarative i.e. knowledge students can think about and say and procedural i.e. knowledge they can do)
- Introduce relevant tier two and tier three vocabulary that will enrich student experience and empower them to access the next stage of their education, find suitable employment and participate in a democratic society.
 - Students value learning for its own sake and develop a range of skills, aptitudes and personal qualities to take into life.
 - These will include non-cognitive skills (such as resilience, working with others, acceptance of feedback and kindness)
 - At each key stage, all students acquire and retain the foundational knowledge required for the next key stage at the very least.
 - All students are well-prepared for terminal exams at the end of year 11 and 13.

The curriculum is delivered through teaching and learning across all subject areas. In the Senior Department the timetable operates on a two week cycle of 50 one-hour periods. All departments are required to have curriculum maps and schemes of work which are updated regularly. Every subject makes a contribution to the learning experience; however, the aim is to present a coherent curriculum rather than a series of unconnected learning experiences. To this end cross-curricular themes are encouraged.

- Each subject/team has developed long-term road maps that clearly lays out the curriculum across the relevant key stages, so that the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire each academic year is made explicit.
- Subject/teaching teams evaluate and identify the concepts that are central to the mastery of each subject. They must then maintain an unrelenting focus on helping students to learn this knowledge.
- Each unit of work must be supported by a knowledge organiser that stipulates with precision the material-to-be-learnt. This must include relevant tier two and tier three vocabulary and should be used consistently across each department

Key Stage 3:

In Years 7 to 9 students experience a wide range of subjects across the main areas of the learning experience (scientific, mathematical, technological, aesthetic and creative, human and social, physical, moral and spiritual). The Key Stage 3 curriculum includes the subjects of English, mathematics, science, design and technology, drama, art, music, history, geography, languages (French or Spanish), computing, citizenship, PSHRE (Personal, Social, Health and Religious Education) and physical education within the Key Stage.

Years 7 to 9 are placed in sets for mathematics and all other subjects are taught in mixed ability groups.

Key Stage 4:

The core curriculum consists of:

- GCSE English and English Literature
- GCSE maths
- GCSE science
- PE (non-exam course)
- PSHE (non-exam course)

In Years 10 and 11 all students follow a broadly academic curriculum with a broad range of GCSE subjects. Core GCSE subjects of English Language, English Literature and mathematics are studied. Students also follow one of two science options: GCSE science trilogy (equivalent to two GCSEs or the three separate GCSE sciences). The majority of students are also expected to study at least one Modern Foreign Language (French or Spanish).

The options process allows students to choose from a wide range of optional GCSE subjects based on their individual interests and abilities. These include art, business studies, computer science, further maths, dance, drama, geography, history, health and social care, design and technology, music, physical education, and religious studies.

Teaching and learning takes place in ability sets for mathematics and in mixed ability groups for optional subjects. The curriculum is underpinned by Information and Guidance (IAG) across the Academy. This includes careers advice and guidance and the tutor system. Students participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and are encouraged to seek opportunities to take the lead in these.

Key Stage 5:

There is an open choice of subjects in Key Stage 5 and many students cross the Arts/Science divide. Students can opt for a combination of GCE and BTEC subjects across the option blocks.

In Year 12 students choose to study three subjects from a wide range of A' Level and BTEC courses on offer. Students may also study for the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). There is an expectation that all students will continue with their three subjects through to Y13. No subject changes for A Level or BTEC should be made in Year 12 after October.

Sixth Formers are involved in the wider life of the Academy by organising clubs, helping in the Community and doing duties. Many students gain a great deal from the extra-curricular activities which provide valuable learning experiences outside academic study.

Careers guidance

Careers guidance is given before choices are made at both Key Stage 4 and 5. In all the Key Stages, students are taught across the curriculum in well-equipped specialist rooms. Wherever grouping or setting operates there is regular monitoring to ensure that students follow a programme appropriate to their learning needs.

We expect our students to take full advantage of all the opportunities on offer to them and view their education as an active and participative experience. We expect that as they progress through the Academy they take more responsibility for their own learning and develop independence of thought.

Homework is considered an integral part of the learning experience and is set for all subjects and year groups. Homework tasks are set via our learning platform Google Classroom. Homework is planned into the curriculum and consistently applied across subjects. It should provide students with the opportunity to practise, embed, extend upon or apply the knowledge that they have been taught in lessons, or provide the opportunity to improve a piece of work.

Changing/ discontinuing subjects

Birkenhead High School Academy expects all students to embrace the opportunities that the curriculum offers both inside the classroom as well as through the enrichment programme.

For GCSE optional subjects, the academy recognises that in exceptional circumstances there may be a desire from a student to change an optional GCSE subject. The deadline for all changes is the October half term of year 10. In such cases the request to change a subject must be in writing from the parent/carers and addressed to the Principal for consideration.

The academy expects all students to complete GCSE qualification in all of their GCSE subjects (both core and optional). For GCSE optional subjects, the academy recognises that in exceptional circumstances there may be a desire from students/parents to discontinue a subject (for example based on medical evidence). In such cases, the request to drop a subject must be in writing from the parent/carers and addressed to the Principal for consideration.

Revised by Jon Cartledge March 2026

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