

## **Blackwater Community School Leaving Certificate Applied Policy**

### **Relationship to the school mission, values, aims:**

Blackwater Community School is committed to quality education. It aims to create a caring community where students feel cherished, secure and happy. It aims to give students access to a broad and balanced education and to develop their academic, physical, emotional and spiritual potential to the full. In the context of this vision, the school makes provision for students who are academically unable to or who choose not to, follow the established Leaving Certificate at Senior Cycle. Hence, the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme was introduced when Blackwater Community School opened in 2003.

### **Rationale:**

The school has an open and inclusive admissions policy and caters for all students from the catchment area, irrespective of ethnicity, cultural/religious background and special educational needs. To this end it endeavors to provide a variety of educational programmes suited to the needs of all students in our care.

### **Legislative Context:**

This policy is grounded in the legal framework as outlined in the Constitution, the Education Act 1998, the Equal Status Act 2000 and the EPSEN Act 2004.

## Objectives:

In keeping with current Department of Education and Science educational policy we at Blackwater Community School wish to encourage and facilitate as many students as possible to continue in full-time education after the end of the Junior Cycle. We endeavor to achieve this objective by offering a range of options at Senior Cycle. These options include: Leaving Certificate (established), Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA).

The aims of Senior Cycle are to develop each student's potential to the full and to equip him or her for further education or training, or for the world of work.

The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA). has as its primary objective the preparation of participants for adult and working life. It also sets out to:

- develop the students literacy and numeracy skills
- enhance the personal and social development of students
- promotes those qualities that are fundamental to the development of an individual with an enterprising outlook
- provides opportunities to develop the students processes of self-evaluation and reflection
- encourage strong community links
- promote the use of a broad range of teaching methodologies and student- centered learning
- provide access to further education and training.

## **Policy Content:**

### **The Programme:**

The Leaving Certificate Applied is a distinct, self-contained two-year Leaving Certificate Programme aimed at preparing students for adult and working life. It consists of four half-year blocks called sessions. Achievement is credited in each session.

Courses are designed on a modular basis and are of thirty hours duration. Each year is divided into two sessions (September to January and February to May) over the duration of the Programme. Students must take a total of 44 modules. They are also required to complete seven Student Tasks over the two years of the Programme.

Courses are offered in three main areas:

- ***Vocational Preparation***
- ***General Education***
- ***Vocational Education***

Each course is made up of a number of modules. Each module takes half a year to complete. At Blackwater Community School we also provide a number of practical courses, Vocational Specialisms, from which the student can choose. At present the specialisms offered to students include Hotel and Catering and Engineering. The modules offered in each area are subject to review and may change to take account of teaching personal/expertise and resources.

The Programme is set out as follows:

**THE LEAVING CERTIFICATE APPLIED PROGRAMME:**

| <b>Area</b>                   | <b>Course</b>   | <b>No of Modules</b> |
|-------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| <b>VOCATIONAL PREPARATION</b> | <b>Vocational Preparation and Guidance</b>                      | <b>8</b>             |
|                               | <b>English and Communication</b>                                | <b>4</b>             |
| <b>VOCATIONAL EDUCATION</b>   | <b>Vocational Specialisms (2 full courses)</b>                  | <b>8 (4x2)</b>       |
|                               | <b>Mathematical Applications</b>                                | <b>4</b>             |
|                               | <b>Introduction to Information and Communication Technology</b> | <b>2</b>             |
| <b>GENERAL EDUCATION</b>      | <b>Social Education</b>   | <b>6</b>             |
|                               | <b>Languages:</b>   | <b>2</b>             |
|                               | <b>Irish</b>  | <b>2</b>             |
|                               | <b>Italian</b>  |                      |
|                               | <b>Arts Education</b>   | <b>2</b>             |
|                               | <b>Drama</b>  | <b>2</b>             |
|                               | <b>Music</b>  |                      |
|                               | <b>Leisure and Recreation (including Physical Education)</b>    | <b>2</b>             |

|                  |  |                |
|------------------|--|----------------|
| <b>ELECTIVES</b> | <b>Religious Education<br/>Science</b> | <b>2<br/>2</b> |
|------------------|--|----------------|

### **Assessment:**

Assessment takes place on the completion of modules, and there is also a final examination in each of the following areas:

- English and Communication
- Two Vocational Specialisms
- Mathematical Applications
- Language
- Social Education

As students complete their course work they collect credits. It is possible to collect a total of 200 credits.

Credits are awarded as follows:

|                              |            |
|------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Completion of courses</b> | <b>62</b>  |
| <b>Student tasks</b>         | <b>70</b>  |
| <b>Examinations</b>          | <b>68</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>200</b> |

Students who successfully complete the programme are awarded a Leaving Certificate from the Department of Education and Science. The certificate is awarded at three levels:

- Pass: 120-139 credits
- Merit: 140-169 credits
- Distinction: 170-200 credits

Candidates who get less than 120 credits or who do not complete

the course, are awarded a Record of Experience.

While the Leaving Certificate Applied will not qualify students for direct entry to third-level courses, students who successfully complete the Programme will be able to proceed to many Post-Leaving Certificate courses.

### **Attendance**

In order to be awarded credit, students must attend all classes and out-of-school activities related to the modules and complete the key assignments related to the module. Students must be present in school for 90% of each module to earn credit.

### **Work Experience:**

The school facilitates the compulsory work experience element of the Programme by organising work experience on each Friday during term time. It is school policy that students experience up to four different work experiences over the two years of the Programme and that they should not be paid for any work done directly as part of the LCA Programme.

### **Selection**

Students wishing to participate in the LCA Programme must apply in writing to the LCA Coordinator in March of the previous year. Interviews are conducted with both prospective students and their parents in April. Consultation with the Special Needs Department, Guidance Counsellor and Principal takes place and

consideration of students with learning difficulties is a priority.

### **Teaching and Learning:**

As the Programme is characterised by educational experiences of an active, practical and student-centred nature, teachers deployed in the LCA Programme use methodologies that are active and inclusive.

The use of active teaching and learning methodologies across the LCA curriculum promotes those qualities that are fundamental to the development of an individual with an enterprising outlook: self confidence, responsibility, co-operation, teamwork, problem solving, independence, decision making, initiative.

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### **Roles & Responsibility:**

The Programme Coordinator, Ms Gillian Jeffries, has overall responsibility for the day to day running of the programme. She is assisted in her duties by a core team made up of

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The team meet on a regular basis both formally and informally and continually evaluate and review current practice.

### **Role of Parents**

Parents are key players in the education of their children in an inclusive setting. Fostering a good relationship with parents is a priority in the LCA Programme and every opportunity is taken to involve parents in decisions regarding their children. An "open door" policy for parents is encouraged and parents are consulted regularly by phone or informal/formal meeting.

### **Role of Guidance Counsellor:**

The Guidance Counsellor assists the LCA Programme Coordinator in preparing the students for and evaluating work experience. She advises students with regard to possible career choice and assists them in making applications to employers or to institutions offering Post Leaving Certificate courses.

The LCA has had a very positive effect on retention rates at Blackwater Community School and the Guidance Counsellor keeps statistics on record which show a high success rate in terms of students finding employment directly or progressing to further education.

She also offers a counselling service to students who may need extra support due to personal or family difficulties.

### **Role of Special Needs Department**

The SEN Department is responsible for supporting the learning of Students with Special Educational Needs in the LCA Programme.

The provision for SEN students, is carried out in a number of ways, including, withdrawal of students for extra support, the creation of small class groupings and team teaching.

Resource time may be allocated to those students with psychological assessments as agreed by the SENO. In class SNA support is provided where appropriate. Students are withdrawn for small group support where there is an exemption from Irish. Learning support hours may also be provided to students whose reading ages are three/four years or more behind in their chronological age.

### **Role of Home School Community Liasion Officer**

The Home School Community Liasion Officer supports the LCA programme by encouraging parental involvement at meetings and where issues arise with regard to school completion, discipline, etc.

### **Role of the Principal**

Effective implementation of the LCA Programme requires the active support of the Principal, senior management and the whole school as an institution.

## **MONITORING, REVIEW & EVALUATION**

- The Principal is responsible for ensuring that the Policy on Leaving Certificate Applied is implemented in the school
- The policy is reviewed every year.
- The review is carried out by the School Development Planning Committee.
- Assessment and monitoring of the Policy are carried out on a regular basis by the LCA Core Team