

# Curriculum Policy

## Blackwater Community School



### Review Dates

Stakeholder	Date	Ratify / Review / Amend
Staff	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2026	Review
Parents	January 2026	Review
Student Body	12 <sup>th</sup> January 2026	Review
BOM	January 2026	Ratify

Due for next Review: January 2028

**Scope of Policy:** Whole School

**Relationship to Schools Mission/Vision/Aims:**

Blackwater Community School is committed to quality education. It aims to create 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. These aims inform all teaching and learning in the school.

**Rationale:**

**Goals: What is the policy intended to achieve?**

The curriculum in Blackwater Community School aims to provide opportunities for all students to learn and to achieve within a supportive and formative environment. It sets out to develop enjoyment of and commitment to, learning as a means of encouraging and stimulating the best possible progress and the highest attainment for all students. It builds on students' strengths, interests and experiences and develops their confidence in their capacity to learn and work independently and collaboratively. It equips them with essential learning skills for life.

The curriculum also aims to promote students spiritual, moral, social, physical, emotional, and cultural development and prepares all students for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of life. It strives to pass on enduring values, develop students' integrity and autonomy and help them to be responsible and caring citizens capable of contributing to the development of a just society.

The curriculum delivered draws on the aesthetic and creative, the ethical, linguistic, mathematical, physical, scientific, and technological, the social, environmental, political and spiritual domains. Blackwater Community School implements the curriculum in an innovative way with commitment and energy.

**Policy Content:**

The provisions of the policy

## PROGRAMMES ON OFFER

### Junior Cycle

Junior Cycle (students 12-15 years, 3-year cycle). In line with the New Junior Cycle students will study a maximum of 10 subjects for State Examination. Students will study the four core subjects, Irish, English, Maths, and History, as well as Religious Studies (Non-Examinable) along with 5 other subjects from the following list:

French – German – Business Studies – Home Economics – Materials Technology Wood – Engineering – Music – Visual Art – Graphics – Geography and Science.

Irish, English & Maths may be taken at Higher or Ordinary level while all other subjects will be examined at Common Level, in accordance with the Junior Cycle Framework 2015.

All students will partake in the Wellbeing, which includes PE / SPHE / CSPE / Digital Media Literacy. Wellbeing is **not** for examination by the State Exams Commission.

Wellbeing Hours are allocated as follows over 3 years:

3 Hrs PE

3 Hrs SPHE

3 Hrs CSPE

2 Hrs Digital Media Literacy

In addition to the above changes, as per the New Junior Cycle, as and from September 2021 classes at BCS will be 58 minutes duration, reducing our current number of classes from 42 class periods a week to 29 periods a week.

**AEN Support:** additional support is given to students who qualify for additional help in literacy, numeracy, or specific subjects. Homework club is also provided to assist students with their assignments.

**L2LP:** The Level 2 Learning Programme is available for students who have general learning disabilities in the higher functioning moderate and low functioning mild categories.

Students will study the 5 Priority Learning Units: Communication and Literacy, Numeracy, Personal Care, Living in the Community and Preparing for Work and a variety of Level 2 Short Courses.

## **Senior Cycle**

Transition Year (15 years + - one year programme)

Leaving Certificate Established (2-year cycle)

Subjects on offer: *English, Maths, Irish, History, Geography, French, German, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Agricultural Science, Business, Accounting, Construction Studies, Engineering, Music, Art, Design and Communication Graphics, Home Economics Social and Scientific. These subjects can be taken at all levels (Higher, Ordinary and Foundation where applicable).*

Other subjects (non-exam): PE, Religious Education, Career Guidance.

## **Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme 2-year cycle**

Subjects on offer: as listed above.

Link Modules:

1. Preparation for the World of Work
2. Enterprise Education

The new subject 'Leaving Certificate Life, Community and Work' will replace the LCV from September 2026.

## **Leaving Certificate Applied (2-year cycle)**

Subjects studied range from the following:

*English and Communication, Social Education, Technology, Agriculture & Horticulture, Engineering, Mathematical Applications, Modern languages, Hotel Catering and Tourism, Active Leisure Studies, Vocational Preparation & Guidance, Drama, Music, Introduction to Information & Communication Technology, Leisure & Recreation, Arts Visual, Communicative Irish (LCA1), Language Module (LCA2),*

## **Subject Choice Arrangements**

### **Subject Options: Junior Cycle**

Students make option subject choices before coming into 1<sup>st</sup> year, 5 of the following are selected: Visual Art, Home Economics, Materials Technology Wood, Engineering, Music, Graphics, Business Studies, Science and Geography.

Students avail of a taster module in French and German for 8 weeks and choose one of the language subjects at the end of the ten weeks. Going into 2<sup>nd</sup> year students select their top 5 option subjects to continue for their JC.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> year the core subjects of Irish, English and Maths are run concurrently for all class groups, facilitating flexibility and movement of students between levels within these class groups. All optional subjects in the Junior Cycle are mixed ability in nature.

### **Subject Options: Senior Cycle**

Students have tasters of some subjects/modules in TY. During TY we have a senior options evening for parents whereby all optional subjects are discussed with Parents and Students of TY and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students not doing TY (the following year)

They then attend a senior options presentation from our career guidance department on the implication of subject choice and requirements of various careers. This is reinforced by access in class to careers portal etc during TY. Students entering 5<sup>th</sup> year must select their top 5 subjects to create option bands to best suit the year group. These bands are drawn up on the basis of student demand following completion of a preference form i.e. some subjects appear once while others appear 2 to 3 times.

Currently all 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year maths classes are run concurrently for all class groups, facilitating flexibility and movement of students between levels within these class groups. A foundation level class runs in 6<sup>th</sup> Year only.

## **Curriculum Supports**

### **Supervised Study**

This is provided 5 evenings a week from 3.50 to 5.50pm and from 6.15 to 7.45 – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, from 1.45 – 4.45pm on Wednesday, and on Friday evening study is between 3.50 – 6.30pm. Supervised study is provided from 9.00am – 1.00pm during Halloween, Christmas, February and Easter holiday period, subject to demand.

### **Homework Club**

This is provided 2 evenings a week from 3.45 to 4.45pm for the AEN students in the Junior Cycle. Two teachers typically work during this session, helping students as the need arises. This service is free.

### **Class Size**

There are up to 30 students in general subject classes, 24 in practical subjects and 20 in Home Economics. In the Additional Educational Needs area, class size depends on individual needs varying from 1-1 and small groups.

## **Subject Planning**

Each Subject Department has its own Subject Plan. A copy of these is submitted annually to the SDP Coordinator for BOM approval. The convenor of each subject department is rotated yearly. The department meets on a regular basis throughout the year. This allows for a review and evaluation to be carried out each year. It also includes recommendations from any previous Subject Inspection in their respective areas, as well as any/all WSE and Subject Inspection recommendations.

## **Planning for ICT/Digital Media Literacy**

ICT is integrated across the Curriculum in Blackwater Community School. The quality of teaching and learning is enhanced through the use of whiteboards, a networked computer system, two dedicated computer rooms, 3 Computers on Wheels (COWs) laptops, tablets etc.

In the school year 2025-2026 students in first year and third year have a period of Digital Media once a week on their timetable in which they will engage with specific content and knowledge, providing them with opportunities to develop a wide range of key digital technology skills.

In Digital Media Literacy, students learn how to use digital technology and the internet to find information on their own. They also learn how to think carefully about what they see online by deciding what information is useful, what can be ignored, and what can be trusted.

In this programme, students work with Office 365 including Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook to develop these key digital skills. These skills support students, not just in the digital environment we live, but in completing Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs), research, project work and presentations, and help prepare them for the demands of senior cycle subjects in the Leaving Certificate with a 40% project component, known as the Additional Assessment Component (AAC).

**Outline of Studies:**

Safety Online

Office 365 Platform

Microsoft Word (Documents)

Microsoft Presentation ( PowerPoint )

Microsoft Excel (Spreadsheet)

Microsoft Outlook (Email)

Microsoft OneDrive

Transition Year students follow the ICDL programme using the skillsbox website. This is a module based programme that students follow through the school year with two class periods allocated each week. An ICDL (International Computer Driving Licence) course teaches essential digital skills for everyday tasks and the workplace, certifying users in computer literacy through modular training in applications like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and internet use, recognized globally as a standard for IT competence for beginners to advanced users.

Students in Blackwater Community School take modules in:

- Computer & Online Essentials
- Documents ( Word )
- Presentation (PowerPoint )

Students take online tests in these chosen modules to earn internationally recognized certification which is presented at graduation. Students can add on modules, such as Excel to gain extra skills in IT having completed the core three modules.

## **School Assessment**

Summative Assessment is carried out 3 times a year, , mid-November (ARC1), mid-February (ARC2), and the end of May (ARC 3). These reports are available on VSWare for parents to access. Copies of the reports are kept on file in the office.

The results included are

- a) Subject Teacher Comment
- b) Grade and Mark
- c) CBA Descriptor where applicable.
- d) Tutor / Year Head Comment twice yearly.

Formative assessment takes place on a regular basis in all subject areas.

Mentoring of students is carried out after each assessment period for Leaving Cert State Exam candidates. The mentoring team meet with the students individually to trace progress and to advise about the future.

### **Athena Academic Tracker**

The Athena Academic Tracker is used as a means of determining a student's baseline potential in each subject area right throughout the school. Each end-of-term assessment is tracked, and teachers can determine how a student is performing in relation to their potential. This allows us to track each students' progress as they advance through the school and to make interventions if necessary.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The School Management is responsible for ensuring that the Curriculum is provided in accordance with the guidelines as set down by the DES. Individual teachers are responsible for ensuring that the curriculum for each subject is followed accordingly.

### **Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

- The Principal is responsible for ensuring that the Curriculum Policy is implemented in the school.
- The Policy is reviewed every 2 years.
- 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 SDP team.

**Adopted at Board of Management meeting:**

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every 2 school years. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: **Colette Power** (Chairperson of Board of Management)

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Signed: **Denis Ring** (Principal)

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Signed Copy on file.)