

# CURRICULUM GUIDE

## 2016

### INTRODUCTION

Delivering a responsive and forward thinking Curriculum is something we are very passionate about at Brine Leas School. Aimed at preparing and enabling students to progress on to further and higher education and the world of work, we devise the Curriculum carefully to provide both challenge and a broad skill set to each and every student. The success of our Curriculum is in the results our students achieve. However, we constantly seek to review what we offer and how we organise each Key Stage.

### WHAT DOES THE CURRICULUM OFFER?

Brine Leas School provides a broad based Curriculum in line with National Curriculum requirements. We aim to stretch and challenge students, developing their skills, knowledge, attitudes and concepts covering a broad range of subjects. We also aim to offer a Curriculum that recognises individual needs from the end of the primary school experience, successfully delivering them into further and higher education and the world of work

### TRANSFER FROM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ensuring continuity between schools, our Year 7 team works closely with all our Primary partners, collating data on each and every student joining us here at Brine Leas. This enables us to hit the ground running in those first crucial weeks of Year 7. In addition, we initially conduct tests in English and Mathematics to assess levels of understanding and ability to further enhance their learning experience in school. Although we nurture children, we also hope to challenge and inspire them.

### KEY STAGE 3

Brine Leas School offers an innovative Key Stage 3 Curriculum. In addition to the standard National Curriculum Subjects (including English) all students follow a Literacy, Numeracy and Reading programme. These are aimed at supporting the weakest and stretching the strongest, whilst giving extra knowledge and skills to all.

*Hours per fortnight (Timetables are organised on a two-week cycle)*

Year 7		Year 8		Year 9	
Art	2	Art	2	Art	2
Computing	2	Computing	2	Computing	2
Design Technology	4	Design Technology	4	Design Technology	4
Drama	2	Drama	2	Drama	2

Year 7		Year 8		Year 9	
English	6	English	6	English	6
Geography	3	Geography	3	Geography	3
History	3	History	3	History	3
Languages	5	Languages	5	Languages	5
Literacy	1	Literacy	1	Literacy	1
Mathematics	6	Mathematics	6	Mathematics	6
Music	2	Music	2	Music	2
Numeracy	1	Numeracy	1	Numeracy	1
Physical Education	4	Physical Education	4	Physical Education	4
PSCHE	1	PSCHE	1	PSCHE	1
Religious Education	2	Religious Education	2	Religious Education	2
Science	6	Science	6	Science	6

*\*PSCHE – Personal, Social, Citizenship and Health Education*

## KEY STAGE 4

All students study the subjects:-

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Religious Education
- Physical Education
- Modern Foreign Language (French, German, Spanish)
- Citizenship and PSHE

Subject	Courses Available
English	GCSE English Language GCSE English Literature
Mathematics	GCSE Mathematics
Science	Triple (GCSE Biology, GCSE Physics, GCSE Chemistry) GCSE Core Science GCSE Applied Science BTec Principles of Science & Additional Science
Modern Languages	French German Spanish

The vast majority of students at Key Stage 4 will study a Language (other than those that BLS disapples) and can also choose three further option choices. In 2016 the option choices were:-

- Art
- ASDAN
- Astronomy
- Business Studies
- Catering
- Ceramics
- Computer Science
- Construction
- Drama
- Electronics
- Engineering
- French
- Geography
- Graphic Products
- History
- Latin
- Media Studies
- Music
- Performing Arts
- Product Design
- Sport
- Statistics
- Textiles
- Triple Science

## KEY STAGE 5

Wherever possible, the school will put on courses that reflect student demand, providing there are sufficient numbers for the course to run and the school has suitable resources.

Further detail on this can be found in the BL6 prospectus but in 2015 we offered the following subjects:-

- Art
- Biology
- Engineering (BTec)
- Performing Arts (BTec)
- Sport (BTec)
- Business Studies
- Chemistry
- Drama & Theatre Studies
- Economics
- Electronics
- English Language
- English Literature
- Geography
- Government and Politics
- History
- ICT
- Languages – French, German, Spanish
- Law
- Mathematics (Applied)
- Mathematics (Further)
- Media Studies
- Music
- Music Technology
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- Photography (BTec)
- Physics
- Product Design
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Textiles

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND MORAL ISSUES

### • **Religious Education**

Religious Education forms part of the curriculum for all students in KS3 and KS4. At all levels there is study of Christian and other world religions as well as moral and ethical issues; all are looked at from a non-denominational standpoint. Regular assemblies for all students are an important part of our school week. Students can opt to take Full Course RE. It is only possible for parents to withdraw their child from RE lessons and assemblies if it contradicts any other beliefs, however this can only be done after consultation with senior staff and parents.

For legal reasons students would be given alternative work to do but would remain with their original group. Brine Leas School strongly advises against this option.

### • **Health & Moral Issues**

Education in matters relating to health and sex is given in two ways. Certain aspects are dealt with fundamentally within the science course from Year 7, picking up, on the whole, where primary schools left off. The moral, ethical, emotional and social aspects arise within the RE, English and PSHE courses, and are considered with equal care. In addition, some aspects may be covered in Curriculum Enrichment Activities.

Parents have the right to withdraw their child/children from discrete Sex Education lessons (but not the science of reproduction) and the Sex Education policy is available for viewing on the school's website. Parents are welcome to discuss with us in more detail these vital but sensitive areas of their children's education.

## **A SPECIALIST COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY & LANGUAGES**

Separate additional funding for Technology and Modern Languages ended some years ago. However, we continue a breadth and depth in all of these areas and so have continued to be designated a Specialist College of Technology and Languages.

### **CITIZENSHIP**

The aim of Citizenship education is to enable pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to become informed active and responsible members of local, national and global communities. In addition, the Government's 'present' programme is also covered as part of Citizenship and through Assemblies.

At Brine Leas we are developing a programme of study for Citizenship in line with statutory requirements, which builds upon and recognises work already done in subject areas, and considers the values already promoted by the House System and within discrete curriculum time.

### **GIFTED AND TALENTED**

A quick glance at Brine Leas' GCSE results will show that able students have the opportunity to excel at this school. It is not unusual for students to gain 10 or more \*A/A grades, so in this sense we can justifiably claim that we are able to meet the challenge of demanding students. However, we take a much wider view of the Gifted and Talented label than just academic success.

There are many students who will show an outstanding ability in some area of their development. Music, Drama and Art are obvious examples, but the same principle also extends to those with an interest in Computer Science, Foreign Languages, Sport or Literature. We have therefore adopted a multi-track approach to this area of school life that provides a broad range of activities but which also enables specialisation and focus where appropriate.

This can be summarised in the following way:-

1. All subjects enable students to study to the highest level.
2. Accelerated or expanded study is available in each Curriculum Area. For example, students are able to take three separate Sciences, double Modern Languages, double Creative Arts (Art & Music for example) double Humanities and so forth.
3. All students follow a specialist programme in Design Technology and ICT at KS3 and have the option to do so at KS4.
4. Additional study facilities and opportunities are available through residential courses, master classes, revision classes and visits to Universities and high-tech industries.

5. The House System encourages individual excellence and performance in Sport, Music, Drama, Languages, Dance, Public Speaking and a range of specialist events and competitions.
6. The school provides a rich kaleidoscope of opportunities with concerts, full theatre performances, visiting professionals and participation in county music and drama activities for those who possess outstanding ability.

Our intention is to provide a broad base of curriculum enrichment that enables able and talented students across a wide range of talents to develop their skills, enthusiasm and expertise to the highest levels. OFSTED commented very favourably upon this approach, particularly the value of residential courses and the opportunity for self-development within the House System.

## **MEETING ALL LEARNING NEEDS**

Many students, including some of the most able, may benefit from individual help at some stage of their careers. Our aim is to monitor each child's development carefully and to identify and meet his/her needs, as and when they arise. All students, as far as possible, follow the full mainstream curriculum. Only those with substantial learning difficulties pursue alternative courses, which are usually individually negotiated through Annual Reviews of their Statements of Special Educational Needs.

The School has a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils. There are three principles which are essential to developing a more inclusive curriculum:-

- 1) Setting suitable learning challenges.
- 2) Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs.
- 3) Overcoming whole school and subject specific barriers to learning and assessment for both individuals and groups.

Some children come to us with considerable reading problems and our aim is to work with these pupils intensively, often in small groups, so that they can join ordinary lessons as soon as possible.

A range of support strategies are available, from placement within a small class for English lessons, to inclusion in booster classes working through Literacy and Numeracy, to some time spent weekly with an adult volunteer reader and/or peer support. This support continues as necessary and as resources permit, throughout the school. Similar strategies are employed to help those with problems in arithmetic.

There may also be occasions when children of above average ability need help on specific areas of their work. Specialist subject staff consult experienced teachers in the Special Educational Needs area on these issues. Further support for pupils with learning difficulties is sought through external agencies including the Community Health, Educational Psychologist, Learning Support and Sensory Impairment Services.

The work of subject departments and their specialist staff in the school is structured to take this into account, but in addition to ensuring involvement of such students in extra-curricular opportunities, teachers are always on the look out for children who need extra stimulation and are keen to give whatever help is needed.

We believe that extending and challenging gifted and talented students is an important part of our work.

Brine Leas School operates a Learning Enhancement Centre which will further support the learning of students in need of further support.

## **OUTSIDE THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

Brine Leas is a busy and vibrant school. We firmly believe in enriching our curriculum and in providing opportunities for all students to participate fully in the life of the school.

A planned programme of events and activities exists to involve all students during the year and encourage responsibility, enjoyment and self-development. This means that, in Year 7, your child has the opportunity to spend an induction week at the Menai Centre in Anglesey. This allows them both to make new friends and to get to know tutors and staff through team-building and problem-solving activities.

Field trips and visits are arranged to places of interest – international trips to China and France, historical sites, art galleries, museums and theatres - whenever they are relevant to coursework or are of wider educational value. Visits to Russia and Mozambique successfully took place in 2013-14. In 2016 our World Challenge students are due to go to Borneo. In addition, all students may take part in ski trips and improve their language ability through visits and 'exchanges' to Brive and Cologne.

Our two 'Curriculum Enrichment Weeks' sees Years 7 to 9 involved in activities, wide and varied, from visits and walks to in-house Drama activities, Duke of Edinburgh and Field Work.

In addition to the House System, the School runs many clubs and societies, which reflect the expertise and interest of both staff and students.

The School offers many different sports with students having the opportunity to participate in traditional school games such as football, hockey and netball, as well as trampolining and many others. Competitive sport is encouraged with students being selected regularly at both County and Regional levels.

Music is a very important part of the Brine Leas scene with well-qualified staff as well as a team of specialist instrument teachers. No previous experience is necessary and every opportunity is taken to encourage students to participate and develop their individual talents. The school orchestra and choirs are well known in the local area, and within school there are many talented musicians and a busy schedule of concerts reflecting the commitment of all involved. We provide many members of choirs, bands and orchestras with some students also attaining national recognition.

Drama, too, is both part of the curriculum and a part of students' wider experience. The House Drama Competition, large-scale productions and visits by touring groups ensure that all our students benefit from live theatre.

Outdoor pursuits are increasingly popular and are supported by a programme that can lead to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Last year over 50 students achieved the award, with a similar number planned for this year.

## **EXTERNAL EXAMINATIONS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Brine Leas School is confident that its KS4 curriculum has courses to suit all abilities and preferred learning styles, and that the KS5 options and curriculum choices are suitable for sixth form students. All Year 11 students are prepared for external examinations.

Most students take 10 or more GCSE's or equivalent qualifications and results have always been well above national and county averages.

Our Ofsted report is now 8 years old, however, we continue to seek external validation through advice and support. This process serves to question and challenge our current practices.

We are justly proud of our outstanding academic record and our results are set out in the enclosed tables. On average, over the last few years, at least one third of students have achieved 8 or more high grades in external examinations.

Students from KS4 proceed to 'A' Level courses, or the equivalent, in considerable numbers with outstanding success.

Wherever they choose to study, Brine Leas School provides an excellent foundation for their future academic career choices.

## **CAREERS GUIDANCE AND EDUCATION-BASED WORK EXPERIENCE**

Careers Guidance is introduced gradually from Year 7, and intensifies in Year 9 when students begin to think about their choice of option courses. In Years 10 and 11 it forms an important aspect of the Independent Learning course.

All students are interviewed in Year 11 by experienced staff responsible for careers work and benefit from individual and group counselling.

All students undertake a 1-week Work Experience placement in Year 11, which helps to develop the attitudes and habits needed when they enter the world of work. We work hard to maintain our many contacts with employers in industry, commerce and agriculture, who generously offer opportunities to our students and ensure that the time they spend with them is valuable and worthwhile.

Many members of the community give their time freely to contribute their expertise to different areas of the curriculum, from technology to science and business studies. The enrichment programme enhances the curriculum and allows students contact with adults other than teachers.

Impartial Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) is available to all students in the school through Changing Education.

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework is set in every year group. We believe that young people should acquire the habit of working independently as early as possible.

In the lower school, the amount of time a student should spend on homework each night should average one to one and a half hours (it will of course, vary a little from night to night, and, indeed from child to child). In upper school, a substantial amount of homework is expected, especially where examination work is involved. Each pupil has a homework timetable and is expected to keep a homework diary, which is signed by parents and tutors each week.

From time to time problems arise over homework (parents feel their children are taking too long over it, or cannot discipline themselves to get on with it, or are not getting enough of it). In every case we would like to know about such problems as soon as possible, so that we can do what we are able to solve them before they become too serious.

## **THE LIBRARY AND RESOURCE CENTRE**

All students are encouraged to use the school library. Permanently staffed, the library has an extensive range of books, magazines and articles as well as multimedia facilities. 'Accelerated Reader' and 'Lexia' is used to track and encourage reading in all year groups. All students are given an extensive introduction to the use of the library and independent research is an important aspect of our curriculum. To facilitate this, the library is open at lunchtimes as well as before and after school.

## **CONCLUSION**

The curriculum is never set in stone. Each Year group can have different needs and in light of this, alterations to the curriculum are sometimes made. Many traditional elements to our curriculum remain at KS3, KS4 and KS5, yet at the same time it embraces and welcomes innovation.