

# Governors' Curriculum Statement

## Introduction

Saint Aidan's is a Church of England High School with an inclusive Christian ethos. Our vision is:

We **aspire** to be a school where life is lived in "all its fullness" (John 10:10).

We **believe** in the God-given potential of every one of our students.

We **succeed** by working together as a school where all can thrive and where excellence is valued.

Every aspect of our curriculum is designed to match this vision, whether in formal lessons or in the wider experience of students.

## The formal curriculum

### Aims

Our students spend five years at Saint Aidan's and in that time will spend about 5000 hours in the classroom. Our curriculum aims to ensure that (in no particular order):

- Students are well-prepared for adult life – academically, socially, emotionally, morally and spiritually. This includes being highly literate and numerate.
- Students have the opportunity to engage seriously with a wide range of disciplines. This includes our core subjects of English, mathematics, science and religious education, but should never be limited to them. The arts, humanities, languages, technology and physical education are all important in a Saint Aidan's education.
- Students gain useful qualifications. This is done through high standards of teaching and ensuring that students follow the courses which are right for them. We will never enter students for qualifications purely to boost the school's performance statistics.
- Students love learning and want to continue to learn whatever their destination after Saint Aidan's.
- All students are supported and continually challenged, including the most able and those with SEND.
- Financial or social barriers do not prevent students from accessing our curriculum.

### Key Stage 3

All students follow a common core of subjects for the first three years, including but not limited by the National Curriculum. We believe that this is essential to allow them to experience enough of a wide range of subjects and so that they are old enough to make the right choices when the curriculum is narrowed for GCSE exams. We use specialist teachers wherever possible.

Students have discrete lessons in all three years in English, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, religious education, German and / or Spanish\*, history, geography, art, music, drama (Year 8 and Year 9), physical education, computing, technology, food and nutrition, and PSHCE (Year 7 and Year 9)

\*All students study German or Spanish in Year 7. The majority pick up the second language in Year 8, while some continue with one language.

## **Key Stage 4**

All students follow a core academic programme of study which includes English, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, RE, PE and PSHCE.

All students take GCSEs in English Language, English Literature, Mathematics and Religious Education. All also take either separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics or a Combined Science course which contains elements of all three sciences and results in two GCSEs.

Almost all students also take three additional GCSE or GCSE equivalent qualifications, resulting in 9 or 10 GCSEs or equivalent in total, depending on the Science qualifications taken.

GCSE options currently offered are Art, Art (Graphics), Business Studies, Computer Science, Design and Technology, Food and Nutrition, Geography, German, History, Physical Education and Spanish.

GCSE equivalent qualifications offered are, Engineering Design, Health and Social Care, Performing Arts (Music or Drama pathways available) and Sports Studies.

A very small number of students each year with particular additional educational needs may take fewer optional GCSEs / GCSE equivalents, in order to provide a curriculum which is specifically tailored to them.

Students' option choices are guided, to ensure that all follow a set of options which are academically challenging for them and which provide a good foundation for the next stage in their careers.

## **The English Baccalaureate**

To match the English Baccalaureate students must take both a humanities subject (history or geography) and a language (German or Spanish), leaving one free choice. This is appropriate for many and students are encouraged to choose options which include both a humanities subject and a language. However, we are committed to a broad offering at Key Stage 4, and value equally other non-EBacc subjects including religious education. For this reason we do not compel students to take humanities or languages beyond the end of Year 9. In practice about 90% of students opt for at least one humanities or language subject at GCSE and about 50% opt for a full English Baccalaureate GCSE combination.

## **Religious Education**

RE is a core subject at Saint Aidan's. This allows students to develop a good understanding of religious beliefs and practices and encourages them to reflect on their own ideas and beliefs without telling them what they "should" believe. As a Church of England school we follow Blackburn Diocese's guidelines in RE. This includes study of Christianity and other religions, including Islam.

## **Personal, Social, Health and Careers Education (PSHCE)**

High quality input in areas such as careers, health, sex and relationships and other aspects of personal development is provided from Year 7 through to Year 11. This is done through a combination of discrete lessons in PSHCE, aspects of other lessons, three Personal Development Days per year and other year group specific events. Our PSHCE curriculum meets the requirements and guidance set out in the current RSE and Health Education statutory guidance document. Our Careers programme is comprehensive and meets all of the Gatsby benchmarks.

## **Assessment**

Students work is assessed regularly to check on understanding, to allow the right support to be provided, to inform the next stages of teaching and to allow students and parents to be informed of progress. Progress is reported formally three times a year and there is a formal exam week for each year group.

## **Beyond the formal curriculum**

Saint Aidan's places a great value on what students do outside their "lessons". The school offers an unusually broad range of extra-curricular activities each day and an exceptional range of residential visits outside term time.

## **Clubs and societies**

The school encourages and enables staff and students to run clubs and societies at lunch and after school. This always includes musical, sporting, dramatic and academic curricular enrichment.

## **Visits**

The school is outward looking and aims to broaden students' horizons. Trips and visits are vital. All students will have the chance to take part in several visits during the school day while at Saint Aidan's; a voluntary contribution may be requested but nobody is turned down on grounds of ability to pay. National and international residential visits are held regularly in school holidays. The school has to charge for these but aims to make sure that there is a range of costs and that parents are given a long period to pay.

## **16 by 16**

This is Saint Aidan's own reward scheme which allows students to gain credit at Bronze, Silver or Gold level for doing things which are important but are not recognised in the exam system. This includes participation in extra-curricular activities, leading collective worship and volunteering inside or outside school.

## **Collective Worship**

As a church school we see collective worship as an integral part of our curriculum. All students have the opportunity to take part in worship each day, whether in forms or in larger groups. Students and staff are encouraged to lead and participate in worship. Worship at Saint Aidan's is Christian in character but recognises and values the different backgrounds and beliefs of students and members of staff. Parents have the right to withdraw students from collective worship, but this rarely happens.