



**BISHOP RAWSTORNE**  
Church of England Academy

# Curriculum Policy

*'But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere'*  
James 3:17

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**FORTITER ET FIDELITER**  
*Bravely and Faithfully*

## **Bishop Rawstone Church of England Academy Curriculum Policy**

### **Verse**

“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”

James 3:17

### **Vision**

“Bishop Rawstone Church of England Academy aspires to cultivate wisdom rooted in Christian Values. It is our vision that all members of our community will experience life in all its fullness, flourishing through dignity, knowledge and understanding, bound together in unity, giving hope and worth to all.”

### **Our Values**

Hope, Service, Compassion, Peace, Wisdom, Fellowship.

Our values are taken from the work of Neville Norcross ‘Christian Values for Church Schools’.

Whilst there are many Christian values, we have chosen the six above to complement our commitment to a rich curriculum and outstanding pastoral care.

### **Philosophy**

Bishop Rawstone Church of England Academy is a Church of England school within the Blackburn Diocese. As a Christian community, we believe that education is a gift and a means through which every child can discover their God-given potential. Our curriculum is shaped by our commitment to wisdom, dignity, knowledge, and understanding—providing each student with the opportunity to flourish intellectually, morally, and spiritually.

Our curriculum is broad, balanced, and ambitious. It is designed to nurture curiosity, ignite a love of learning, and develop the whole child. We aim to cultivate not only academic success, but also character, resilience, and compassion, in line with our Christian values of hope, service, compassion, peace, wisdom, and fellowship.

Learning at Bishop Rawstone is not just about the accumulation of knowledge – it is about shaping individuals who can think deeply, act justly, and contribute positively to society. Every subject, every lesson, and every learning experience is an opportunity to build both intellect and character.

Rooted in our Christian identity and our belief in the dignity and worth of every individual, our curriculum reflects the diversity of our world and equips students with the skills and understanding they need to navigate it with integrity and purpose.

## CODE OF CONDUCT IN OUR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Our aim is to ensure that you feel happy, safe and secure in your school.

### *We believe:*

- that every individual in our community is a unique and valuable creation made in the image of God.
- we all have a right to be considered equal, worthy of respect and esteem.
- we all have a responsibility to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves.

## OUR AMBITIOUS INTENT

Our inclusive curriculum ensures academic success, character development and enjoyable enrichment experiences to support every learner to grow into confident, resilient, and responsible citizens of the future. God is at the heart of all we do, with Christian values underpinning our focus on the social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development of our young people and the promotion of fundamental British Values.

### Curriculum Principles

At Bishop Rawstorne, we put curriculum design at the heart of our student learning experiences. As Hirsh writes, knowledge is ‘mental Velcro’; we build our mental schema by connecting new ideas to the knowledge we already have. Underpinning the knowledge rich curriculum are three core principles, adapted from the work of Daniel T Willingham, namely:

- **Factual knowledge precedes skill.** Students need knowledge to provide context to their learning. Without knowledge, students will not be able to think critically.
- **Proficiency requires practice.** To achieve deep knowledge, students must practice. Alongside this, we must also assess how proficient students are becoming.
- **Intelligence can be changed through sustained hard work.** Successes and failures need to be discussed in terms of effort, not ability, meaning that all can achieve.

These principles shape our two-stage model: Foundation Knowledge (Years 7–8) and Key Stage 4 (Years 9–11), with the intention of delivering an academically ambitious, rich, rigorous and well-sequenced curriculum that meets the needs of all our students - academically, personally, and inspirationally – and responds to staff, students’ and parental voice. We believe in empowering students to acquire deep knowledge, master key skills, and develop the cultural capital necessary for success in later life.

### Curriculum Structure

Our two-year Key Stage 3 provides thorough foundation in all subjects, to allow our students to make informed choices when they opt to take their GCSEs. Across our curriculum, each year is designed as a pathway to the next, with the curriculum focussing upon core subject content knowledge and skills. We clearly map our expectation of the rich knowledge, skills and understanding demanded by each subject. Our curriculum is designed to support knowledge retention and recall whilst building subject fluency to deepen learning.

Through a strong understanding of the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum, Key Stage 2 assessment data, transition information and baseline assessments upon entry, we ensure that our curriculum builds on prior learning, addresses any gaps in knowledge, and prepares our students for the challenges of secondary school and beyond. Informed by Ofsted's 'The Wasted Years' (2015) report, we have ensured that Years 7 and 8 are rigorously planned and rich in content, building on primary knowledge with deliberate sequencing that avoids Key Stage 3 being treated as 'just a holding phase'. We are committed to meeting the requirements of the full Key Stage 3 National Curriculum, ensuring our programmes of study meet or exceed its ambition, not just in breadth, but in depth, sequencing, and conceptual progression. Recognising the academic, social, and emotional needs of our learners dictates our bespoke curriculum model but also takes into consideration our local context and parent and student voice.

Our curriculum structure reflects our curriculum intent: to provide depth, breadth, and coherence throughout Years 7–11, while ensuring that GCSE study is not simply exam preparation, but an opportunity to deepen learning beyond the specification. As such, year 9 becomes a transitional year, where strong relationships can be fostered that are built upon throughout Key stage 4, and where we can really 'get down to business'. This is a view supported by the September 2014 DfE research report 'Influences on Students' GCSE attainment and progress at age 16 Effective Pre-School, Primary & Secondary Education Project (EPPSE)' which found that 'Students' experiences and views of secondary school in Year 9 indicate that students who perceived their school to place higher 'emphasis on learning' in Year 9 had significantly higher GCSE attainment and made more progress across the five years in secondary school'. In the words of Sean Harford, former HMI, and National Director for Education, "It's not the years... it's the mileage."

The impact of that can be seen in our GCSE outcomes, which put us in the top 10% of schools nationally for attainment, and top 15% nationally for progress. It also enables us to promote highly academic routes for the majority of students, with significantly higher than average entries for the EBacc. We do not simply start to teach Key Stage 4 content from the start of year 9, stretching the content over more time. We focus on establishing the foundations needed for success before accelerating to give students access to the highest levels of attainment. Our ambition being to secure extremely high proportions of the highest grades.

The EBacc plays a particularly strong role and is encouraged as a pathway for all - followed by a considerable proportion of our students. All students study the core subjects of English, maths, science and RE, along with history or geography. All students have the opportunity to study a language and around two thirds do each year. Creative and practical opportunities, such as music, art, drama, and a range of technology subjects are also recognised for the important part they play in developing the 'whole child'. We are committed to running these subjects, even where numbers are low, as we believe in the value they create for the individuals and the school community.

We believe in the role of the curriculum to develop all students' spiritual, moral, cultural, and social development, ensuring students student gain a sense of self-worth, achieve self-reliance and independence of thought. Students follow a programme of personal and social and health education, relationships and sex education and citizenship, helping to develop an understanding of issues such as relationships, drugs, sex education and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Additionally, a thorough careers programme runs throughout Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, an extra-curricular programme, offering a range of experiences and activities, ensures that every student continues to enjoy the arts and creative opportunities until they leave us at the end of Year 11. This

includes our ambitious and ground-breaking work to build the Duke of Edinburgh Award into our curriculum offer.

### **Curriculum Developments**

For the 2025/26 academic year we are making changes to the number of GCSEs that students study. They will now study one fewer subject, as our students currently have an average GCSE entry of 8.3 compared to the national average of 7.3. There will still be a significant cohort who will study triple science and the full EBacc, resulting in 10 GCSEs, but most students will access the full EBacc and 9 GCSE entries. With the increase in the number and duration of exams over recent years, students have found it too much to cope with and, for some, it has negatively affected their mental health. This has given us the opportunity to develop our innovative Duke of Edinburgh delivery. It is our intention, from 2026/27, to continue with 100% of students studying German for at least an additional year.

It has been our belief that GCSEs done properly need more than two years to teach well and to prepare students for exams. If after the curriculum review the content of GCSEs is reduced, we have now set our curriculum up in such a way that we could redevelop the curriculum to blur the boundary between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4; this would give students more time to make their option choices. Whether this would be a move back to a 3-year Key Stage 3, or a more blended approach with a split option system, would be dependent on the extent of the changes decided upon by government.