

Blakestown Community School
The Beating Heart of Dublin 15

Prospectus

2020 – 2021



Fáilte ón bPríomhoide

Welcome to Blakestown Community School. I am proud to introduce our school to you and hope that this prospectus will give you an insight into the special qualities of our school and the outstanding all-round education we offer. Since 1979, we have provided excellent education for the people of Dublin 15. We are very proud of the broad curriculum we offer, our excellent academic results, our first-class facilities and the exceptional array of extra-curricular activities we provide.

Every child deserves an education. It is a fundamental human right. My own outlook can be summed up in the words of Thomas Davis when he declared, "Educate that you may be free." As educators, our duty of care obliges us to do much more than simply teach, assess and report. We facilitate, empower, provide formative feedback, coach, mentor, comfort, guide and provide a moral roadmap to all students in our care. We don't just teach subject content. We know that students are not simply receptacles of knowledge. Our teaching enables our students to cross the threshold of the knowledge, understanding, skills and values pertaining to a subject area and interact with it in such a way that is age and stage appropriate, can transcend subject silos and enable them to be assessed using a range of assessment modes in order to show progress and point towards the steps to be taken needed to drive the learning forward. All of this in a safe, caring space.

Our dedicated teachers have a genuine interest in the development, progress and wellbeing of each student. They work consistently to support each student in the achievement of their potential and strive to meet the demands of an ever-changing society and workplace by ensuring that our curriculum is relevant and challenging. Excellent practice in all areas – anchored in the innovative use of Learning Outcomes, distillation into time-specific Learning Intentions, and co-created Success Criteria – are key priorities, as we fully embed Junior Cycle and prepare for imminent changes to Senior Cycle. Our Assessment and Reporting practices reflect a true and comprehensive picture of each student's progress.

I hope that this prospectus will give you a sense of what our school is like and will assist you in deciding on the next stage of your child's education. Additional information may be found on our website and social media pages.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Frank Milling B.A., H.Dip.Ed., M.Ed. (Management & Leadership)

Príomhoide



Mission Statement

Blakestown Community School is committed to developing our school community by fostering academic and personal development in an inclusive and caring environment through enhancing the quality of learning for all our students.

We are a Community School

As a Community School, represented by the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS), we provide equal access to a comprehensive, community-based, multi-denominational education and pioneer the delivery of an innovative model of teaching, learning, assessment and reporting. In so doing, we aim to contribute to a just and caring society. In line with the stated objectives of ACCS, we:

- innovate and disseminate good practice in Blakestown CS
- communicate effectively with all stakeholders
- facilitate our staff in the execution of their responsibilities
- commit to use and account for resources efficiently and effectively
- influence and manage change by committing to partnership initiatives
- promote the growth of the Community School model





We are a values-driven school. This means that:

1. BCS is a sustainable and democratic school that promotes equality and equity by:

- empowering learners through the development of critical thinking skills and collaboration, thereby fostering a deep understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- empowering learners to engage in dialogue and debate, to consider all viewpoints, embrace differences and participate in decision-making processes.
- being grounded in positive relationships, restorative in nature.
- preparing learners to be socially, environmentally, ethically and digitally responsible global citizens.
- promoting an equality-based and inclusive Admissions Policy and enacting educational practices that are guided by the principles of inclusion and wellbeing.

2. BCS is a holistic school, which:

- affirms that both traditional and digital literacy and numeracy transcend all areas of learning, leading to teaching, learning, assessment and reporting which is socially and personally relevant and environmentally and ethically sound.
- promotes and values the arts.
- actively provides for physical and mental wellbeing.
- encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning, on a lifelong continuum, in preparation for a continually changing employment landscape.
- enlightens, challenges and widens students' perspectives of the world around them, encouraging reflection and engagement with local and global issues.
- balances knowledge, understanding, skills and values throughout its curriculum and related teaching, learning, assessment and reporting model.
- encapsulates the learning experiences a learner can have, encompassing all the cognitive, affective and aesthetic learning domains.

3. BCS is a student-centred school, in which:

- formative assessment is the norm in the classroom and summative assessment is used cautiously to confirm learning, and as a diagnostic tool when appropriate.
- there is a balance between higher and lower order questioning and where we seek evidence of critical thinking and metacognitive analysis from the learner.
- student voice, student participation and student leadership are promoted and facilitated.
- learners are enabled to take control of and become active agents in their own education.
- learner choice and engagement are reflected through the facilitation of pathways into further education, apprenticeships, internships and 3rd Level.



We are an integrated and reflective school. This means that:

4. BCS is a highly coherent school which:

- champions collaboration as the cornerstone to providing a coherent learning experience
- is characterised by integrated curricula and supports across levels, which result in smooth transitions for students.
- a choice of general, vocational or applied pathways are offered at senior cycle, actively supporting all educational opportunities.
- fosters regular internal dialogue and dialogue between the various stakeholders involved in education provision, with the aim of agreeing a shared vision for what education should empower learners to achieve.

5. BCS is a school in which professional responsibility:

- is the hallmark of highly qualified teachers and leaders, cognisant that professional, respectful dialogue and deliberation are key traits of reflective practitioners, and that teachers and leaders are themselves lifelong learners.
- drives us all to build capacity and carry out leadership roles in an innovative environment.
- is nurtured through national and internal CPD, which emphasises deep engagement, risk-taking, focussed theoretical discussion and the construction of knowledge, thereby empowering teachers to build professional networks with one another, develop Communities of Practice and increase teacher autonomy.
- is respectful and supportive of a blend of different pedagogical approaches.

6. BCS is a responsive school which:

- adapts to the needs of leaders, teachers and learners based on highly effective national and international practice.
- manages, leads and mediates change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and changes in education.
- utilises the inspection process to affirm good practice and guide where necessary.
- facilitates curricula being adapted to suit a local need.
- engages in regular dialogue with all educational partners and support services, adapting provision as necessary to maximise learner experiences and outcomes.



School Expectations & Aims:

Blakestown Community School encourages all students to become confident, responsible and successful individuals who will make a positive contribution to society. All parties in the school will also strive to ensure that the learning community of students will experience an ambitious, supportive and caring spirit in the school cognisant of the array of talents, abilities and diverse needs of the student population.

The day to day management of the school, supported by all the resources of the school at its disposal, e.g. committed teachers and leaders, guidance counsellors, chaplain, HSCLO, learning support teachers and SNAs, are expected to foster a community that is supportive and understanding of the diverse needs of the student body. They will create an atmosphere of belonging for all, establish activities, events and occasions to foster and inspire students in keeping with the aims and objectives of BCS so as to enable our students to:

- have the highest expectations of themselves and each other
- show respect for all in the school community
- tolerate and celebrate the diversity of our student body and our community
- respect the dignity and ambition of others and to be ambitious for their own success in life by developing the skills they need for the future
- develop as intellectually curious lifelong learners
- be socially, environmentally, ethically and digitally responsible global citizens
- actively promote and sustain their own emotional and physical wellbeing, to promote and respect that of others in our school and to foster a sense of responsibility and resilience

School Goals:

In living our characteristic spirit as a Community School, our goals are to:

- educate students within a Christian and co-educational environment, which is multi-denominational, community-based, progressive and student-centred.
- cherish the unique contribution of each student and remain true to our motto, *Education for Living*.
- promote and facilitate the holistic development of all our students by stimulating their intellectual, creative, physical, social and artistic talents in an atmosphere of challenge and support.
- reinforce the self-esteem of our students through positive affirmation in an environment where effort will be recognised and rewarded
- pursue excellence in teaching and learning, confident of its value in society
- support our students as individuals as they travel through the formative life-phase of adolescence, as manifested in our guidance, counselling and pastoral support structures
- pursue the highest standards of learning and achievement for all students
- promote a sports and cultural programme that recognises and develops the talents of students, parents and teachers
- provide learning and leisure opportunities for the wider community, including parents, local residents and the employees of local businesses via the school's community education programme.



Our motto in Blakestown Community School is:

Education for Living



Why come to Blakestown Community School?

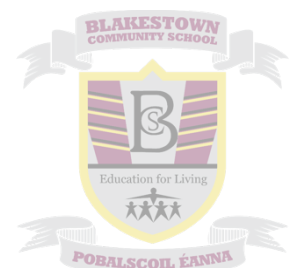
Blakestown CS offers your son/daughter:

- a long-standing tradition and culture of success, achievement and excellence in the academic, sporting, artistic and scientific fields
- high expectations of students in all they do, be it academic, sporting or cultural
- outstanding success in Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations
- a wide-ranging curriculum
- a vibrant, enthusiastic and dedicated teaching staff who are committed to helping students achieve their potential
- a welcoming and friendly environment for pupils
- a strong sense of community within the school
- excellent care and support systems
- free school meals
- a wide range of extra-curricular activities
- excellent facilities including computer suites, science labs, a demonstration/lecture room, modern and well-equipped practical rooms, home economics rooms, art rooms, computers & data projectors in every classroom, an equipped gym, an astroturf pitch and a full-sized sports hall
- ample outside space in a green and peaceful setting
- our past pupils have become successful in all the professions including medical, legal, business, journalism, education, engineering, art, drama and many others.

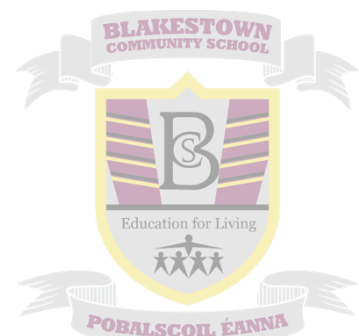
What the Department of Education & Skills says about us:

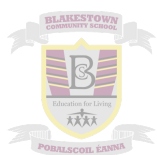
- **"The senior management team is dedicated, hardworking, collaborates very well and has a clear vision for the school."**
- **"The staff of the school is dedicated, caring and committed."**
- **"The members of the board have a very good balance of skills and competences and are very effective in supporting the school's staff and senior management team. The board's members are experienced, well briefed on their roles and responsibilities as evidenced by the number of relevant professional development courses attended by board members in the recent past."**
- **"The senior management team, comprising the principal and deputy principal, is committed to promoting a culture of excellence and quality improvement. They are dedicated and hardworking, have a clear vision for the future of the school which includes leading a very impressive school-improvement agenda. The principal and deputy principal are a constant and proactive presence on the school corridors, are understanding of students' needs and operate an open door policy toward teachers, parents and students alike."**
- **"Procedures for identifying and supporting students with SEN or in need of learning support are very good. These procedures involve very good communication with the teachers in the feeder primary schools, the development and use of individualised education plans, and a range of interventions including in-class co-operative support."**
- **"The pastoral care system is a particular strength of the school. It permeates all of the school's activities and the care team manages the complexities of integrating the work of a range of agencies very well. The team is greatly assisted in its work by the contribution of the year heads and class tutors and representatives from the school completion programme (SCP)."**
- **"The school is highly proactive in promoting students' wellbeing; a broad range of whole school initiatives is in place"**
- **"School management is highly proactive in promoting students' wellbeing through a range of initiatives including the Amber Flag and events such as the Health and Happiness Week. Student leadership is promoted in this context through the student council's role in organising Anti-Bullying Week, and through the fifth-year student peer education programme with Jigsaw. School management further supports student health and wellbeing through the provision of parent education courses in Cookery and Parenting."**
- **"The school self-evaluation (SSE) process is very well established, reflecting the senior management's desire and ability to plan for improvement and the engagement of staff with the process."**
- **"The school is maintained to a very high standard and the visual environment, which includes subject walls and other displays, is engaging and educationally stimulating."**
- **"All of the lessons featured very good classroom management, respectful interactions, effective integration of resources and good lesson planning. In the very best lessons, the learning intentions were agreed at the outset and fully explored as they evolved. Very good discussions were also facilitated at the conclusion of the lessons to determine the extent to which the learning intentions were realised. These lessons also featured very high expectations of student engagement and attainment and involved the effective use of AfL strategies including excellent teacher questioning which served to develop the students' understanding, oracy skills and encouraged them to speculate, hypothesise and explain their reasoning."**











Curriculum

The curriculum offered in Blakestown Community School is designed to give each student the opportunity to realise their full potential and to develop their interests and talents. Students follow a broad range of subjects and are given a wide variety of learning experiences.

1. Junior Cycle (JC)

Gaeilge (except where exemptions apply), English, Mathematics, Geography, History, French, German, Science, Home Economics, Music, Art, Craft and Design, Material Technology (Wood), Metalwork, Technical Graphics, Business Studies, Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Religious Education, Physical Education and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). It is hoped to introduce Spanish for 1st years in 2020

2. Transition Year (TY)

Transition Year is an optional one year programme offered to all students after completing the Junior Cycle. This year offers students the opportunity to bridge the transition from Junior to Senior Cycle. The focus of the year is on providing the students with a wider educational experience and a balance between academic and practical studies. It encourages personal and social development and recognises the need for students to grow in independence. The TY programme in Blakestown CS has been very successful over the past number of years and the feedback from students and parents alike has been very positive. The development of the students' confidence, maturity, team-working skills and communication skills are particularly evident.

3. Leaving Certificate Established (LC)

Core subjects:

Gaeilge, English, Mathematics, SPHE/RSE

Option subjects:

Biology, Chemistry/Physics (as one subject), Accounting, Business, Home Economics, Art, Engineering, History, Geography, French, German, Technical Drawing, Construction Studies, Music

The Career and Counselling service in the school is available to any student that needs advice prior to choosing Leaving Certificate option subjects with a view to their third level choice of courses. IT, Careers, RE and Physical Education are also studied in Senior Cycle.

4. Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

This is an enhanced programme offered alongside the traditional Leaving Certificate. Places on this programme are allocated on the basis of each student's subject choices at Senior Cycle. Candidates study two modules over the two years: Enterprise Education and Preparation for the World of Work. Students then take an extra exam at the end of 6th Year.

5. Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)

The Leaving Certificate Applied is a distinct, self-contained Leaving Certificate programme. It is designed for those students who do not wish to proceed directly to third level education or for those whose needs, aspirations and aptitudes are not adequately catered for by the other two Leaving Certificate programmes. The Leaving Certificate Applied is structured around three main elements – Vocational Preparation, Vocational Education and General Education - which are interrelated and interdependent. This programme is characterised by educational experiences of an active, practical and student-centred nature.



Board of Management

The Board of Management consists of nominees from the teaching staff, the parent body, and the Trustees. It determines the ethos and status of the school. It is responsible for the management of the school, which it delegates to the principal.

Parents' Association

The Parents' Association meets once a month and acts as a representative body that:

- represents the views of parents
- informs parents of developments in education and in the school
- fosters co-operation between parents, teachers and school management
- provides opportunities for parents and the school principal or representatives of staff to meet and exchange ideas on the education of their children, to discuss issues such as discipline, homework etc. and to address topics of mutual interest
- helps with the provision of extra equipment and fundraising

Parents who wish to become actively involved in the school are welcome and encouraged to join the Parents' Association.



Reports and Parents' Meetings

Reports on each student's progress are sent home three times a year (November, February, May). Formal meetings for parents of students in each year group are held annually. On these occasions, parents and teachers can meet to discuss the progress being made by the student or any other matter of mutual concern. Parents are encouraged to come to these meetings as they allow us to build up the strong links between home and school which are of benefit to the students. If parents wish to discuss their son/daughter's progress with a member of staff at any other time, they should contact the school office to make an appointment with the appropriate member of staff.

Student Leadership

Active student involvement in the running of the school is strongly encouraged. In this regard we have a Student Council which provides a line of communication between students, management, staff and parents. This forum represents the views of the student body on matters of concern to them. Our Students' Council is made up of elected representatives from every year group. The position of Prefect is one of responsibility and leadership. Becoming a prefect forms a valuable part of a pupil's personal development, opening their mind to new levels of responsibility and participation in a very positive way. Prefects are a tremendous help to the school and play a particularly important role in mentoring younger pupils.





Positive Learning Environment

The learning environment in Blakestown Community School is a positive one, with a strong emphasis on the promotion and reward of positive behaviours and healthy relationships. Our school provides a caring and safe environment for our students, where the positive values of respect, fairness, kindness, self-discipline and hard-work are expected from all of us.

Our foundations are built upon positive relationships and interpersonal connections and any discipline issues will be dealt with in a restorative manner. Restorative Practice is about “building empathy in students and staff, holding people responsible and accountable for their behaviour, and increasing a feeling of community”. Teachers give students the time to narrate and talk through suitable sanctions or reparations to repair harm.

A structured rewards system is operated by all teachers rewarding and celebrating students for positive attitude, cooperation, engagement, citizenship, participation, effort, successes and improvements made.

Student Support

Belonging, happiness, security and participation are fundamental in Blakestown Community School. A Student Support Team monitors student needs. Democracy, participation, student voice and parental involvement are key values within Blakestown Community School. Students have an active role in the life of the school, while teachers are encouraged and expected to provide leadership opportunities for students within their classrooms and generally throughout the school.

School Meals Programme

The School Food Company has been chosen by the Senior Leadership Team to provide a catering service to our students. The Senior Leadership Team has directed the company to ensure that:

- a large selection of seasonal fruit will always be available
- fruit consumption will be promoted through initiatives such as Free Fruit Friday
- no fizzy or sugar sweetened beverages be sold
- no chocolate, crisps or other baked confectionary be sold
- no deep-fried foods be sold
- 90% of breads are wholemeal





Blakestown Community School

Sheepmoor Avenue

Blanchardstown

Dublin 15

D15 F978

(01) 821 5522

www.blakestowncs.ie

@BlakestownCS

