



Birchwood

Community High School



Aspiration Knowledge Kindness



Welcome

to Birchwood Community High School

I am absolutely delighted and privileged to be the Headteacher of Birchwood Community High School. As a school, we understand young people only get one chance to experience school-life and our aim is very simple: to support them to grow into confident and independent young people with high aspirations, secure knowledge and kind hearts.

Our school is a very special community that we are incredibly proud of: it is made up of 1100 students (11-18), supportive parents, forward-thinking governors, as well as an inspirational and talented body of staff who are fully committed to delivering a broad and balanced curriculum for all. Our school is a safe, caring and happy place for our students and they enjoy attending lessons. We take every opportunity to praise and celebrate their successes with them. As well as having every student's full academic potential and high standards of learning at the forefront of our practice, we also recognise the importance of encouraging our students to pursue all of their interests. They are given many opportunities to develop their leadership skills (subject leaders, school council, sports leaders, anti-bullying ambassadors) and we are lucky that our staff are very dedicated, giving up their own time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities before and after school.

Our caring and supportive ethos enables our students to move forward as confident, caring and respectful young people who are ready for their next stage in life. Quite simply, we ensure that they are the very best that they can be.

We are a community of passionate professionals who are as committed to your child's future as you are. Quite rightly, we are very proud of our school.

E. Mills
Headteacher

'The best things about Birchwood Community High School is it's easy to make new friends and the lessons are fun.' *Year 7 student*





Curriculum

At Birchwood, we believe that every student deserves to have thoughtful, purposeful and enjoyable lessons throughout their time at school and across all of their subjects. This is why we follow a curriculum that is 'knowledge-rich'. This means that all lessons include information that has been carefully selected and deemed to be of the highest importance. All lessons link together so that all of the content to which students are exposed is vital and part of a bigger sequence. Essentially, the curriculum has been carefully designed so that students build on key concepts during each year of study. With this approach, by the time they leave Birchwood, students will have encountered a range of valuable and inspirational learning material- this will empower them to approach their future with confidence and integrity.

As well as developing the academic experience of students, the curriculum has been created to create numerous opportunities for personal enrichment. We believe that a truly brilliant education, as well as equipping students with scholarly knowledge, guides them to be kind, responsible citizens.

Curriculum Principles

All units of work at Birchwood, are underpinned by our curriculum principles:

Knowledge- we want our students to be exposed to powerful information and ideas, across all of their subjects.

Revisiting key knowledge- we want students to retain key concepts so we purposely revisit foundational knowledge and skills, throughout the curriculum.

Memory- the majority of homework set for years 7-9 is revision homework. We also hold half-termly memory workshops to support students' ability to remember more, for longer.

Vocabulary- all subjects have vocabulary lists to empower students to articulate their ideas with confidence.

Cultural capital- we want students to be exposed to a range of ideas and experiences beyond their academic subjects.



'Before I came to Birchwood I felt excited but worried because I didn't know what it would be like. Now I feel like I've always been at this school.'

Year 7 student



Pastoral Care

Relationships between students and staff are frequently cited by students as one of our biggest strengths as a school.

Our pastoral system is made up of our five year groups and four houses. Every year group has a weekly assembly with their Head of Year to celebrate their successes and inform students about key dates and events, across the year.

Our four houses are: Fides, Libertas, Veneratio and Dedicatio – the Latin names of our core values of belief, independence, respect and commitment. We firmly believe that all knowledge should be accessible- this is why our Houses are named using a language that is traditionally seen as elitist.

Each House is made up of forms from across all five year groups to form a pastoral family. They have half-termly assemblies together and compete in the regular House competitions to strive to be awarded the accolade of House of the Year in the summer term and win the House Cup.

Students are placed in mixed ability form groups with a dedicated form tutor who will usually be with them for their five years in school. The form tutor is the first point of contact for parents/carers. At Birchwood, we believe there should be a strong relationship between the form tutor, the student and their parent/ carers, built on respectful communication and mutual respect.

In alignment with our value of aspiration, our form names are based on inspirational people. Although students retain the same Greek letter as part of their form name throughout their time at Birchwood, their form time figures change every year so that students learn about a wide range (30 in total) of significant figures during their five years with us. The forms are:

Year 7 – Einstein, Curie, Franklin, Newton, Hawking, Darwin

Year 8 – Pythagoras, Hypatia, Turing, Lovelace, Archimedes, Germain

Year 9 – Yousafzai, Mandela, Indira Gandhi, Pankhurst, Marx, Ebadi

Year 10 – Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Wollstonecraft, de Beauvoir, Arendt

Year 11 – Woolf, Orwell, Angelou, Austen, Achebe, Murakami

There are five Heads of Years and five Assistant Heads of House to oversee the progress

and pastoral care of every student. We also have a Pastoral Manager and two Deputy Pastoral Managers- this team work tirelessly to support our community. They are all based in Polaris, our pastoral centre.

We also have a range of expert staff and resources available in Ancora- our inclusion centre. Our Ancora team are highly trained to help students who may face barriers to their learning and provide a highly encouraging and nurturing environment.

Pastoral Curriculum

Our pastoral curriculum is meticulously planned to align with the academic curriculum, ensuring important themes and issues are revisited and applied in such a way that their importance is understood by all.

To ensure that students maximise their time in form, all of form tutors follow the programme below:

Day 1 and 2: Form-time reading

Day 3: Year group assembly

Day 5: Pastoral curriculum (PSHE)

Alongside form time, we also hold two full days which are dedicated to exploring the more sensitive elements of the pastoral curriculum and to ensure that our students have ample time for thought and reflection on potentially challenging topics.

Celebrating Success

We work hard to create an atmosphere where success is noticed and celebrated by staff and students alike. Our range of house challenges provide all students with the opportunity to shine and earn achievements points for their house. These achievements are celebrated weekly, as part of house assemblies.

We also hold termly achievement assemblies and whole school assemblies to celebrate students' endeavours in all areas of school life. Alongside this, we host presentations to celebrate successes at the end of each year at KS3 and the end of KS4 - for college students, we do this at the end of Year 13.

Communication

Our main points of contact with parents/carers is through ClassCharts. We fully understand and appreciate how important it is to have open dialogue with our community.

Extended Curriculum

All of students are encouraged to take advantage of the array of opportunities that we provide them with, both academically and beyond the classroom to fulfil their aspirations.

We have a wide range of extracurricular clubs, as well as a lunchtime enrichment program- these enable all students to participate in wider school life and flourish beyond the curriculum.

We know how important these experiences are for a deepened understanding of the world and society.





‘Since being at Birchwood I feel really confident. I know Birchwood is a great school and I’m happy here.’

Year 8 student

Our Facilities

At Birchwood, each department has their own dedicated building or area on the site. We are very proud of our facilities and the subject-specific art work on the walls to inspire our students. In recent years, we have invested a huge amount in site to ensure that our students have the very best environment in which to learn and truly feel connected with the Birchwood community.

ICT

We have a brand-new ICT hub in school which is dedicated to computing, business, media and health and social care subjects and is comprised of 5 specialist rooms. We have Wi-Fi throughout the site plus students benefit from the use of hundreds of laptops and tablets.

Performing Arts

The purpose- built Performing Arts Centre is a real highlight of the school, it includes a theatre with tiered seating and professional sound and lighting systems (which can be divided to provide two separate drama teaching spaces). There is also a dance studio with a fully sprung floor to accommodate our many budding dancers. Upstairs, we are very lucky to have a number of purpose- built music teaching rooms, practice rooms and our very own recording facility.

Our students very much appreciate these spaces and we feel fortunate to witness how these specialist environments really help to cultivate our students’ talents.

Our students also have the opportunity to take up instrumental lessons with specialist teachers including: singing, guitar, drums, woodwind and keyboards.

The department offers numerous opportunities to perform, with the highlight of the year being the annual school production. Past shows include ‘Blood Brothers’, ‘Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat’, ‘Grease’ and ‘The Road 2 Oz.’

Sport

Sport is an integral part of life at Birchwood, we are lucky to enjoy world-class facilities including extensive playing fields, 3G pitch, gym, basketball court and sports hall. Students have the opportunity to develop their skills and take part in a wide range of different sports, with many teams and individuals enjoying success. We are particularly proud of our girls’ sports offer with rugby, football and netball teams all competing regularly.

Our sporting program is excellent and is included in the curriculum through core PE, GCSE PE and BTEC Sport with many students progressing to Birchwood College to pursue BTEC Sport at Level 3. We have established a number of regular events involving our local primary schools such as trampolining, cycling proficiency and a transition athletics day in September for all our new year 7 students. Sport is celebrated widely in the school through assemblies and a variety of events including our annual Sports Day, and our Sport Celebration evening.

We have strong links with Warrington Wolves who train on our 3G pitch and are involved in numerous events with our students.





Transition

At Birchwood Community High School, we are committed to supporting students' journey from primary to secondary school. Whilst this is an exciting time, we also understand how challenging this can be which is why we have a comprehensive support offer in place, for all students who are new to our school.

We know how important it is for students to feel familiar and comfortable within their new environment which is why we hold an array of transition events and activities in the lead up to students joining us in year 7. Last year, we hosted:

Memory workshops for primary schools

The Warrington Primary Spelling Bee

Science experiments

Primary students having a special performance of our school show

We also plan our transition days to ensure that students have the opportunity to acclimatise to their new school, whilst also taking part in a variety enriching activities. Last year, these included:

Constructing mini bridges

Making eco decorations

Playing rugby with Warrington Wolves

Understanding more about the solar system through virtual reality

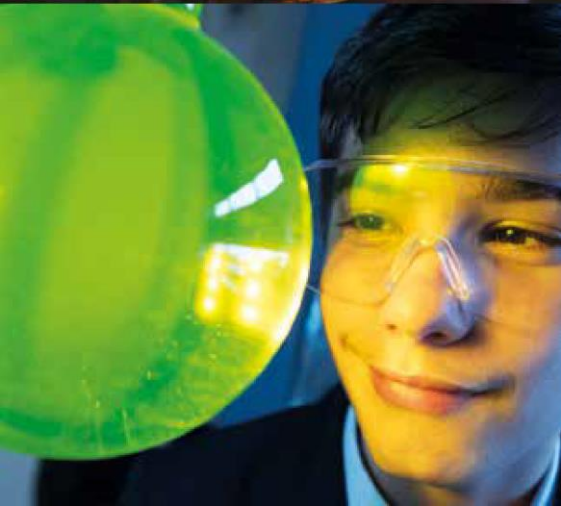
Innovation workshops

Oracy workshops

A visiting theatre production of 'The Reluctant Dragon'

All of these activities take place alongside a robust, bespoke pastoral programme to ensure that all students feel confident and supported by the time that they arrive in September.

We look forward to working with you and your child, very soon.



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