

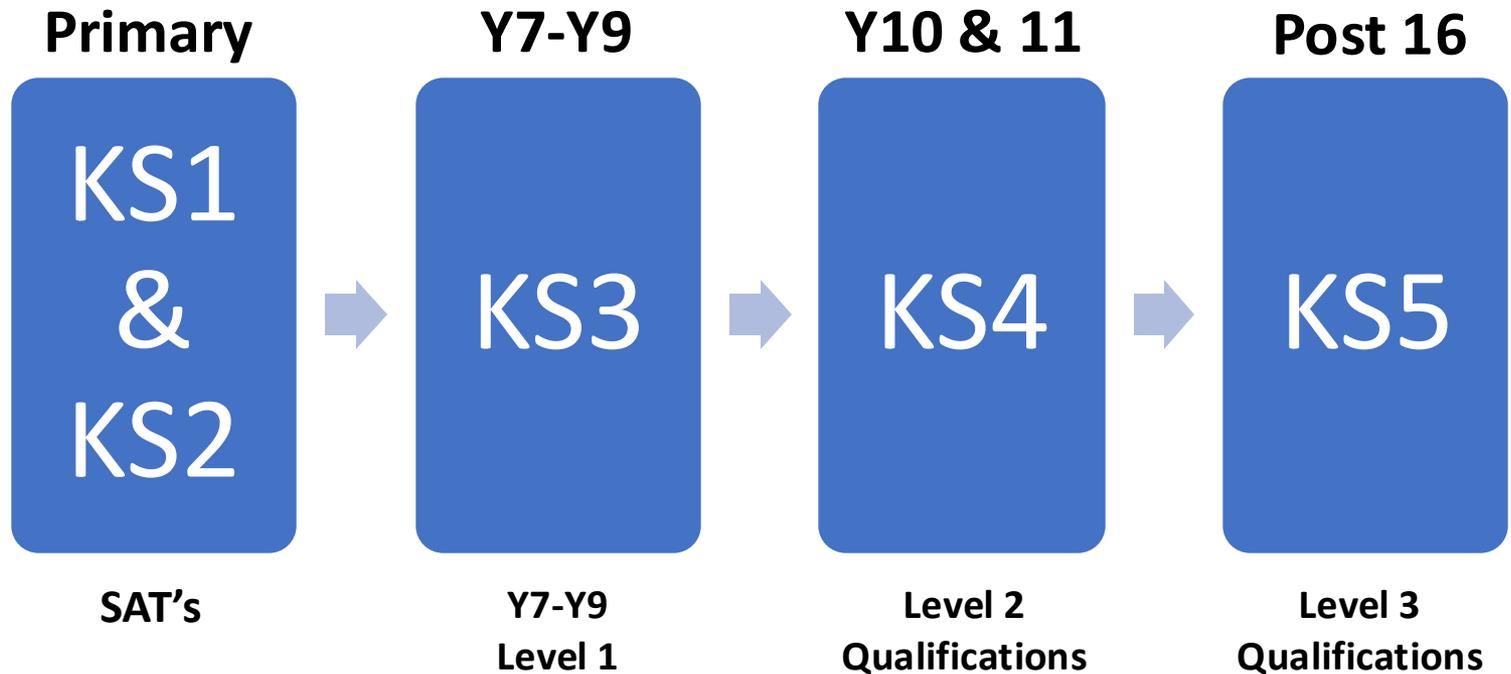


**Birchwood**  
Community High School

# KS4 CURRICULUM 2026 - 2028

**ASPIRATION KNOWLEDGE KINDNESS**

# SCHOOL JOURNEY



# KS4

## Level 2 Qualifications

### Grade Equivalency

New Grades	Old Style Grades	Vocational Grades
9	A**	Level 2 Distinction *
8	A/A*	
7	A	Level 2 Distinction
6	B	Level 2 Merit
5 (Strong Pass)	B/C	
4 (Standard Pass)	C	Level 2 Pass
3	D/E	Level 1 Pass
2	E/F	
1	F/G	
U	U	U

# Core Curriculum

English Language

English Literature

Maths

Statistics

Combined Science

Core PE

Personal Development

*This gives **6 GCSE's** and makes up 30 out of 50 lessons*

# Choices

Core subjects take up the majority of lessons each week.

Option subjects take up the remaining lessons.

Both GCSE and BTEC options take the same amount of lessons a fortnight.

These are the options we offer:

- Art GCSE
- Business & Enterprise BTEC
- Computer Science GCSE (available for 6+ maths students)
- Dance BTEC
- Design & Technology GCSE
- Drama GCSE
- Food Preparation & Nutrition GCSE
- Engineering Level 2 WJEC
- Drama GCSE
- French GCSE
- Geography GCSE
- History GCSE
- i-Media Level 2 OCR
- Music GCSE
- Photography GCSE
- Physical Education GCSE
- Religious Studies GCSE
- Separate Sciences GCSE (available for 7+ science students)
- Textiles GCSE

# English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

Not a qualification in it's own right

The EBacc is:

- English Language and Literature
- Maths
- The Sciences (Combined, Triple or Computer Science)
- Geography or History
- A Modern Foreign Language (Spanish/French)

The EBacc keeps students options open for further study and future careers

# English Baccalaureate (EBacc) – Why?

EBacc subjects are considered essential to many A Levels and degrees. They open up lots of doors in full time education and also in employment.

We have high aspirations for our students, and are therefore guiding them to enjoy a vast array of opportunities beyond our school.

Research reveals that studying the EBacc can help improve a students performance in English and maths.

The Government used to expect 90% of all students to be studying the EBacc.

# English Baccalaureate (EBacc) – Why?

In November 2025, the Government confirmed they are removing the formal requirement for students to study the full suite of EBacc subjects.

Despite this change, **Birchwood remains committed to the value of the EBacc.** We believe these core subjects keep doors open for the most competitive university courses and careers. Specifically, we believe studying a **Modern Foreign Language** provides a significant edge in an increasingly global job market.

## **Looking Ahead to 2027 and beyond**

The Government has issued new guidance regarding the range of subjects students should study, set to take effect nationally in 2027. We have chosen to model our curriculum on this guidance **one year early**. By doing so, we are "future-proofing" our students, ensuring you remain competitive and prepared for life beyond our school gates.

# Y9 FUTURES – Questions to ask

## **What subjects do I enjoy?**

Only you know the answer to this. If you like a subject, you will not mind working hard at it. Hard work is essential whatever you choose. Most subjects have a written element.

## **What subjects am I good at?**

As well as thinking carefully about this yourself, you should use the advice of your teachers and form tutor.

## **How do I enjoy working?**

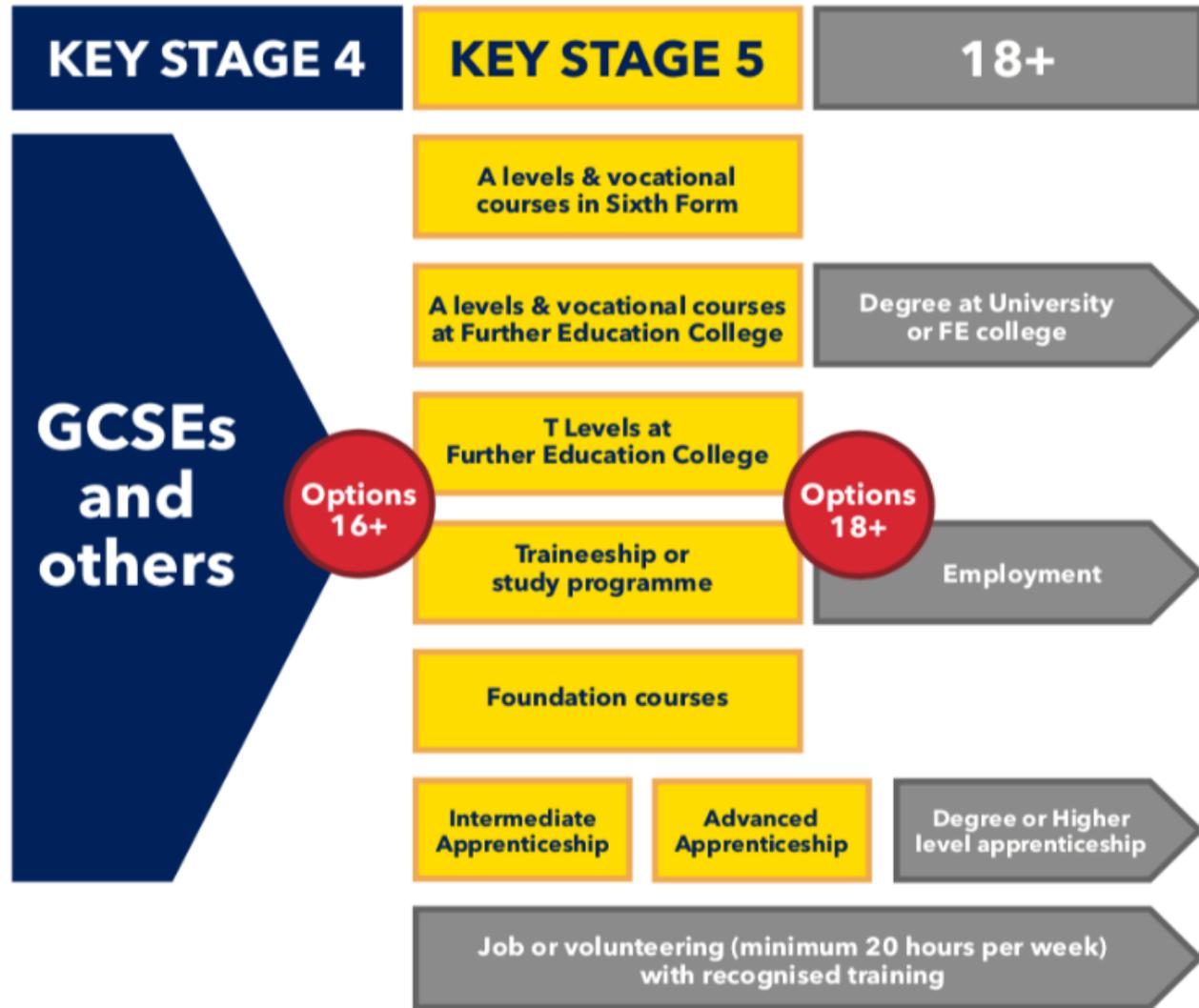
Some subjects will require you to do a lot of NEA work (coursework). Others will be assessed mainly by exam. Think about which way of working you prefer. If you are not confident in exams you should consider coursework based courses or BTEC/OCR/WJEC courses where there may be a smaller exam element. Excellent attendance is essential with coursework subjects.

- **Deadline – 27th March** - we can make changes in the summer term, but courses may be full, so it is important to get it right now.
- **Declined options** – in a few cases some students may not be suitable for a course – if that is the case heads of faculty will speak to them and parents
- **Transfer window** – HT1 – in very few cases we may allow students to change courses. This has to start with a parental request and a strong rationale. At this point other subjects may be full. After October half term no student can change courses
- **Dropping subjects** – Same rules as KS3, **students cannot drop subjects** because they don't like it, don't like the teacher, they're not doing very well in it. Students have 50 hours per fortnight that we must fill – if they drop a subject that's 5 hours per fortnight where they must be housed. It is also a loss of a qualification. A grade 1 and above is a pass. The only way this will be considered is for medical reasons and this must go through a panel.

# Attendance

Headline	2025 Results 90%+ Att	2025 Results 80-90% Att	2025 Results Below 80% Att
Number of Students	110	31	13
Avg Attainment 8 Grade	5.24	4.15	2.43
9-7 in Eng & Maths	12	1	0
9-5 in Eng & Maths	58	7	1
9-4 in Eng & Maths	87	18	3
5 Standard Passes inc Eng & Maths	81	17	0
English A8 grade	5.1	4.61	2.69
Maths A8 grade	5.39	3.91	3.38
Open A8 grade	5.16	4.25	1.83

# The future



# Options Booklet

One-page subject summary. Can be found on the school website.  
Students section, Year 9 Options.



**Welcome**

Dear parent/carer,

Choosing options is an exciting process, though a little daunting. We have not structured the process with performance tables in mind so there is still considerable choice and we have maintained a strong offer in the arts and technology subjects. The only things that are compulsory are those designated by law, so nobody is forced to study a language or humanities subject if they really don't feel it suits them. This gives students the ability to choose courses that they enjoy and help develop their talents. Of course a wide choice also brings its own challenges.

We would ask people to look seriously at our BTEC and OCR courses. In the past, people have considered these an option to suit those for whom a full curriculum of GCSEs might be too challenging. This is no longer the case. They are harder than before, still taught rather differently, and offer routes to some attractive university programmes. More broadly, both GCSEs and BTECs offer the chance to start professional life without going into further education. It may seem early, and not a traditional idea, but there are some terrific apprenticeships of all kinds on offer at 16 and 18 years of age. It would be sensible to look at these with an open mind, even at this early stage.

The second thing to reflect upon is the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). This is a qualification comprising 5 GCSEs at grade 4 and above in English, mathematics, two sciences, history or geography and French. At the moment it is a performance indicator.

**Why study English Language and Literature?**

Nationally, everybody has to study English for GCSE. You will complete two GCSEs in English: One for Language and one for Literature. You will have to resit English Language until the age of 18 if you don't attain at least a grade 4 at GCSE. Skills and knowledge developed in English lessons will benefit everybody, no matter what job/ career you choose to do. In English, you will develop your ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in your writing. You will empower yourself through acquiring a sophisticated and nuanced vocabulary that will better equip you for engaging with the adult world. Ultimately, being successful in English will help you be successful in anything that you apply yourself to either in Higher education or work.

**What will I study?**

We study AQA English Language and Literature. Each of these exams are un-tiered which means we can expose all students to challenging concepts and sophisticated vocabulary and ideas.

For English Language, students will analyse extracts and write maturely and intelligently. You will also produce one substantial narrative piece of writing and one transactional piece of writing which includes: a speech, letter or article.

For English Literature, students will study: Macbeth, A Christmas Carol, Blood Brothers, AQA Power and Conflict poetry cluster and Unseen poetry. Students do an essay question for each of these topics and will be required to conduct plenty of revision.

**How will my work be assessed?**

All assessment is exam based. Students will prepare for and sit their English Literature exam at the end of Y10. This will also allow us to focus entirely on English Language in Y11. In Y10 students will sit two Literature exams:

- Paper 1 – Macbeth and Anthology Poetry
- Paper 2 – A Christmas Carol, Blood Brothers and Unseen Poetry

In Y11 students sit two Language exam papers. Reading and writing are assessed equally.

**English**

**HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

Mr C Merrick  
cmerrick@birchwoodhigh.org

**TIMELINE**

- 8<sup>th</sup> February – Careers Assemblies**  
A focus in Form Time for our Y9 students what options mean for future careers.
- 11<sup>th</sup> February – Virtual KS4 Options Evening**  
All of our information will be launched on opportunity for you to find out about the KS4 process
- 22<sup>nd</sup> February to 5<sup>th</sup> March – Options Information**  
Opportunities to watch options videos in Form subjects to offer opportunities for more information they take.
- 25<sup>th</sup> February – Virtual Parents Evening**  
An opportunity to hear about your child's progress
- 11<sup>th</sup> March**  
Deadline for the return of the online Options Form.
- 29<sup>th</sup> March onwards**  
You will be contacted if there is a problem with the choices
- July**  
Confirmation of options

# Subject Videos

Each subject also has a short video clip.

Can be found on the school website. Students section, Year 9 Options.



## Guided Choices

... year for Year 9 students because they will be making choices for their  
... age 4 (Year 10 and 11). This process starts with information, advice and  
... tutor and subject teachers during the Spring Term.

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# Options Form

Given out at  
parents  
evening  
Thursday  
19<sup>th</sup> March

Deadline  
Fri 27<sup>th</sup>  
March

**Birchwood** Community High School

## KS4 OPTION CHOICES 2026

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Form: \_\_\_\_\_

At Birchwood High School all students in Year 10 and 11 will study for ten qualifications:

- GCSE English Language
- GCSE English Literature
- GCSE Mathematics
- GCSE Statistics (Examined in the summer of Year 10)
- GCSE Combined Science (2 GCSE's) (unless you opt to choose Separate Sciences below)
- Personal Development (compulsory but not examined)
- Physical Education (compulsory but not examined)

Students will then be able to choose 4 option subjects and 4 reserve subjects below

**GCSE CHOICE**  
CHOOSE **TWO** SUBJECTS (Both choices **CANNOT** be from the same box)

<b>HUMANITIES OPTIONS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> History <input type="checkbox"/> Geography <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Studies	<b>LANGUAGES OPTIONS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> French <b>Home Language</b> <small>if another language is chosen or chosen in place of English, GCSEs in that language are available. You must also choose the relevant GCSE in that language.</small>	<b>CREATIVE OPTIONS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Art <input type="checkbox"/> Photography <input type="checkbox"/> Textiles <input type="checkbox"/> Music <input type="checkbox"/> Drama <input type="checkbox"/> Design Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Food & Nutrition	<b>SCIENCE OPTIONS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Separate Sciences <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Science
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Reserve Choice 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Reserve Choice 2: \_\_\_\_\_

**FREE CHOICE**  
CHOOSE **TWO** SUBJECTS (You cannot pick another Arts subject (Art, Textiles, Photography) if you have chosen one above. You can pick two GCSE's or two Vocational or one of each.)

<input type="checkbox"/> GCSE History <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Geography <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Religious Studies <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE French <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Art <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Photography <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Textiles <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Music <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Drama	<b>GCSE &amp; VOCATIONAL CHOICES</b> <input type="checkbox"/> BTEC Business & Enterprise <input type="checkbox"/> OCR iMedia <input type="checkbox"/> WJEC Engineering <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Dance <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Design Technology <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE PE <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Food & Nutrition <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Separate Sciences <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Computer Science
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Reserve Choice 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Reserve Choice 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Options Form

## GCSE CHOICE

CHOOSE **TWO** SUBJECTS (Both choices **CANNOT** be from the same box)

### HUMANITIES OPTIONS

- History
- Geography
- Religious Studies

### LANGUAGES OPTIONS

- French

#### Home Language

*If another language is spoken at home (i.e. Polish, Chinese, Spanish, German) then there is a possibility of studying this in your own time and having some more options available. Please see Mr Heston for more details.*

### CREATIVE OPTIONS

- Art
- Photography
- Textiles
- Music
- Drama
- Design Technology
- Food & Nutrition

### SCIENCE OPTIONS

- Separate Sciences
- Computer Science

Reserve Choice 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Reserve Choice 2: \_\_\_\_\_

## FREE CHOICE

CHOOSE **TWO** SUBJECTS You cannot pick another Arts subject (Art, Textiles, Photography) if you have chosen one above. You can pick two GCSE's or two Vocational or one of each.

### GCSE & VOCATIONAL CHOICES

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE History           | <input type="checkbox"/> BTEC Business & Enterprise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Geography         | <input type="checkbox"/> OCR iMedia                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Religious Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> WJEC Engineering           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE French            | <input type="checkbox"/> BTEC Dance                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Art               | <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Design Technology     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Photography       | <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE PE                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Textiles          | <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Food & Nutrition      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Music             | <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Separate Sciences     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Drama             | <input type="checkbox"/> GCSE Computer Science      |

Parent/Guardian Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Reserve Choice 3:

Reserve Choice 4:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Timeline

## **23 February – Y9 Options Taster Assemblies**

A focus in form time for our Y9 students to think about careers and also what options mean for future careers.

## **5 March – Y9 FUTURES EVENING**

This is an opportunity for you to find out about the KS4 curriculum and the options process. It will also be a chance for your parents to speak with your Form Tutor.

## **10 March**

DCP Taster sessions

## **19 March – Y9 Parents Evening – Options Forms Given Out**

A chance to speak to Core subject staff plus any options subjects

## **27 March**

Deadline for the return of the options form.

## **27 March onwards**

You will be contacted if there is a problem with the choices.

## **July**

Confirmation of options.

# Thank you

**Mr D Heaton**  
**Associate Deputy Headteacher**  
**dheaton@birchwoodhigh.org**