



Birchwood Community High School

Birchwood Community High School

Brock Road, Birchwood,
Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 7PT

Tel: 01925 853500

Email: contactus@birchwoodhigh.org

www.birchwoodhigh.org



September 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

Personal Development and Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)

At Birchwood Community High School, we believe that education is about much more than academic success. Through our Personal Development curriculum, we aim to help students become healthy, safe, respectful and responsible members of society who are prepared for life beyond school.

Our Personal Development curriculum is built around our core values of **Aspiration, Knowledge and Kindness**. Through carefully sequenced learning, students develop the knowledge, skills and character needed to make informed decisions, build positive relationships and contribute positively to their communities.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) forms an important part of this wider Personal Development programme and is delivered in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance.

Alongside Personal Development and RSHE, students benefit from a rich programme of opportunities that support their **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development**. SMSC is embedded throughout school life and helps students develop confidence, resilience, respect, empathy and an understanding of the diverse world around them. SMSC opportunities are delivered through lessons, assemblies, collective meetings, enrichment activities, student leadership opportunities, educational visits and wider school experiences.

Our Personal Development Curriculum

The curriculum is organised around three key themes:

KNOWLEDGE – Understanding Myself

Students develop the understanding needed to make informed choices about their health, wellbeing and future lives.

This includes learning about:

- Emotional wellbeing and mental health
- Physical health and healthy lifestyles
- Puberty and adolescent development
- Personal hygiene and menstrual health
- Substance misuse, smoking and vaping
- Reproductive health and fertility
- Personal safety and first aid



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KINDNESS – Understanding Myself With Others

Students learn how to build and maintain respectful relationships and develop empathy, respect and understanding of others.

This includes learning about:

- Healthy friendships and family relationships
- Respect, consent and personal boundaries
- Sexual harassment and harmful behaviours
- Healthy intimate relationships
- Controlling and coercive behaviour
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Challenging discrimination, racism and sexism

ASPIRATION – Understanding Myself Within The World

Students explore their place within modern Britain and the wider world, developing the confidence to make positive contributions to society.

This includes learning about:

- Identity and belonging
- Digital citizenship and online safety
- Social media and online influence
- Financial awareness and money management
- Respectful participation in communities
- Understanding diversity in modern Britain

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC)

SMSC development is a key part of our commitment to preparing students for life in modern Britain and complements our Personal Development and RSHE curriculum.

Spiritual Development

Students are encouraged to reflect on their values, beliefs and personal experiences through assemblies, restorative conversations, mentoring programmes, mindfulness opportunities and our school values programme.

Moral Development

Students learn the importance of making positive choices, acting with integrity and understanding their responsibilities within society through our behaviour curriculum, anti-bullying work, digital literacy education, parental workshops, debates and discussion activities and the wider PEAK curriculum.



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Social Development

Students develop teamwork, leadership and communication skills through enrichment activities, student leadership roles, Duke of Edinburgh opportunities, charity work, community engagement projects, house competitions and educational events that promote kindness, respect and compassion.

Cultural Development

Students are encouraged to celebrate diversity and develop an appreciation of different cultures, faiths and communities through cultural celebrations, religious events, international visits, performing arts opportunities, visiting speakers and our inclusive school culture.

Through our assembly programme, collective meetings, enrichment opportunities and wider school experiences, students are given regular opportunities to develop as thoughtful, responsible and active members of society.

What Students Will Learn

Across Years 7–11, students will study a range of age-appropriate topics, including:

- Wellbeing and emotional health
- Healthy lifestyles and decision-making
- Puberty and physical development
- Healthy friendships and family relationships
- Respect, consent and personal boundaries
- Sexual harassment and sexual violence prevention
- Healthy intimate relationships
- Online safety, social media and digital citizenship
- Equality, diversity and protected characteristics
- Financial awareness and money management
- Fertility, pregnancy and parenthood
- Gambling, addiction and risk-taking behaviours
- First aid and personal safety

Teaching is evidence-informed, age-appropriate and delivered sensitively by trained staff. Lessons provide opportunities for discussion, reflection and the development of critical thinking skills while ensuring students know how to seek support if required.

Personal Development Assessment

At Birchwood Community High School, we believe that assessment should support learning and help students retain and apply the important knowledge and skills taught through our Personal Development curriculum.

To evaluate students' understanding of the curriculum, all students complete a KaST (Knowledge and Skills Test) at the end of the academic year. These assessments are designed to measure how well students have understood and remembered the key knowledge and skills developed throughout their Personal Development learning.



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The assessment draws upon content from across the three curriculum themes of Knowledge, Kindness and Aspiration, enabling students to demonstrate their understanding of topics such as health and wellbeing, relationships, personal safety, equality, diversity, citizenship and life in modern Britain.

The KaST is divided into two sections. Section A consists of multiple-choice questions that assess students' recall and retention of key knowledge taught throughout the year. Section B is based on realistic scenarios and situations, allowing students to demonstrate their understanding of key concepts, apply their learning to real-life contexts, and provide appropriate advice, recommendations and courses of action. This approach enables students to show not only what they know, but also how effectively they can use that knowledge to make informed and responsible decisions.

As Personal Development focuses on preparing students for life beyond school, assessment is used primarily to inform curriculum planning and identify areas where further learning may be beneficial. Unlike other curriculum subjects, Personal Development assessment outcomes are not formally reported to parents/carers through the school's standard assessment reporting cycle. Instead, the information gathered helps us evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and ensure that students are developing the essential knowledge, skills and understanding needed to lead healthy, safe, respectful and successful lives.

Feedback and Responding to Learning

At Birchwood Community High School, feedback is an important part of the learning process and is designed to help students build upon their knowledge, address misconceptions and make meaningful progress over time. In line with our whole-school Feedback Policy, feedback is intended to be **meaningful, manageable and motivating**, ensuring that students feel supported and confident in their next steps.

Students receive regular feedback throughout their Personal Development lessons through a variety of approaches, including questioning, discussion, retrieval activities, knowledge checks and teacher guidance. Feedback may be provided verbally during lessons, through whole-class feedback, or through written comments where appropriate.

Teachers use ongoing assessment to identify strengths, misconceptions and areas for development. Students are then given opportunities to respond to feedback, refine their understanding and apply what they have learned. This approach forms part of our **RAP (Respond, Action, Progress)** model, which encourages students to actively engage with feedback and take ownership of their learning.

Where appropriate, teachers may use green pen feedback and the school's feedback codes to guide students towards improvements and next steps. Students will also complete response activities that allow them to revisit key concepts, correct misunderstandings and further develop their knowledge and understanding.

As Personal Development is a curriculum subject focused on preparing students for life beyond school, feedback is used to support learning and personal growth rather than to generate formal grades. The information gathered through assessment and feedback helps teachers evaluate curriculum effectiveness, plan future learning and ensure that students develop the knowledge, skills and character needed to lead healthy, safe, respectful and successful lives.



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Digital Literacy and Online Safety

Alongside our Personal Development curriculum, students in Years 7, 8 and 9 participate in a structured Digital Literacy programme. These lessons support students to become safe, responsible and informed users of technology in an increasingly digital world.

Topics include:

- Online safety and safe online behaviours
- Digital citizenship and responsible use of technology
- Social media awareness
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies
- Misinformation, disinformation and online influence
- Privacy, data protection and digital footprints
- Cybersecurity and online scams
- Computer literacy and digital skills

These lessons complement our Personal Development curriculum and help students develop the knowledge and critical thinking skills needed to navigate modern digital life safely, responsibly and successfully.

Working with External Partners

To ensure that students receive accurate, up-to-date and specialist information, Birchwood Community High School works in partnership with a range of external agencies and professionals, including the School Nursing Team and Cheshire Police.

These partners support the delivery of aspects of our Personal Development and RSHE curriculum through age-appropriate educational sessions.

School Nursing Team

The School Nursing Team delivers specialist sessions at Upper Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, including:

Year 9

- Understanding local sexual health services
- The law and age of consent
- Contraception and pregnancy prevention
- An introduction to sexual health and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Year 10

- More detailed information about sexual health
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including prevention, testing and treatment
- Accessing support and healthcare services



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Cheshire Police

Police officers support our curriculum through educational sessions on topics such as:

- Knife crime and personal safety
- Child criminal exploitation
- Drugs and alcohol awareness
- Pornography and its impact on relationships and attitudes
- Keeping safe within the community and online

All external contributors work within the school's safeguarding, behaviour and curriculum policies. Sessions are carefully planned with school staff to ensure content is accurate, age-appropriate and responsive to the needs of our students.

Parents' Right to Request Withdrawal from Sex Education

Relationships, Sex and Health Education is a statutory part of the secondary curriculum.

Under government guidance, parents/carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of the sex education elements of RSHE. This includes sex education delivered by school staff or external professionals as part of the Personal Development curriculum.

Before any request is granted, the Headteacher or a delegated member of the senior leadership team will meet with parents/carers to discuss:

- The nature and purpose of the curriculum
- The benefits of participation
- Any concerns that parents/carers may have
- The potential impact of withdrawal on a student's understanding of important health and relationship issues

Please note that parents/carers cannot withdraw their child from:

- Relationships Education
- Health Education
- Any content taught as part of the National Curriculum Science programme

Students who are withdrawn from sex education lessons will be provided with appropriate alternative educational activities.

In accordance with statutory guidance, students may choose to opt back into sex education from three terms before their 16th birthday, regardless of any previous parental request for withdrawal.



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Transparency and Curriculum Materials

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first educators, and we value the important role families play in supporting learning about relationships, health, wellbeing and character development.

In line with statutory guidance, parents and carers are welcome to view our RSHE curriculum plans and teaching materials, including those delivered by external agencies. Further information can be found in our Personal Development and RSHE policies, available on the school website.

If you have any questions about the curriculum, would like to discuss specific content, review teaching materials, or wish to request withdrawal from sex education elements of the programme, please contact the school.

Students will also have opportunities to ask questions anonymously and will be signposted to appropriate support services where required.

Thank you for your continued support in helping us prepare our young people to lead healthy, safe, respectful and successful lives through our Personal Development, RSHE and SMSC provision.

Yours faithfully,

J Richards

Assistant Headteacher

Birchwood Community High School