



Birchwood High School

Where People Grow and Excellence Prevails

PARENT INFORMATION BOOKLET

2026



WELCOME TO BIRCHWOOD

We understand that starting secondary school is a big milestone, not only for your child but for you as a family. It marks the beginning of a new and exciting chapter. At Birchwood, we pride ourselves on being more than just a school—we are a supportive, inclusive community where every child is known, valued, and encouraged to thrive.

We know that change can bring uncertainty, but we want to reassure you that your child is in safe and nurturing hands. Our experienced team of teachers and pastoral staff are committed to ensuring that every student feels welcomed, supported, and inspired from day one.

This booklet is designed to give you all the information you need to feel confident and prepared for the journey ahead. Inside, you'll find key details about our school values, day-to-day routines, and the many ways we help our students settle in and succeed—both academically and personally.

We look forward to working in partnership with you to make your child's transition to secondary school a positive and rewarding experience.

Where People Grow and Excellence Prevails

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

We are a school where everyone is welcomed, supported and celebrated every step of the way. We are rightly proud of our inclusive and comprehensive ethos, where every student can thrive and succeed. Our inclusive ethos is the heartbeat of our community. We are a school where everyone is embraced with open arms and supported every step of the way. We are open to all and proud to celebrate individuality, making sure every student feels valued and empowered to succeed.



At Birchwood, we believe in unlocking personal potential. Whether your child is an aspiring scientist, artist, athlete, or entrepreneur, we're here to help them explore

Part of learning together is respecting and following rules that keep everyone safe and allow everyone to learn in a respectful, calm and happy environment. This booklet sets out the basics of life at Birchwood so that students, parents and carers can work together with a common aim and make their Birchwood journey a success.

As you continue to navigate through our Induction programme and learn more about Birchwood, I am sure you will agree that this school is incredibly special and offers something unique to every student who joins us.

Mr Sam Griffin,
Principal

BIRCHWOOD VALUES:

We have great pride in being an inclusive school, with an all-ability ethos that respects and responds to our students, staff and local community. By ensuring that we welcome all, support all and encourage all we ensure Birchwood is a place where everyone can thrive.

Our school values underpin all that we do. They are:

Kindness: We act with kindness, showing care, compassion, empathy and understanding for ourselves and others.

Resilience: We show courage, perseverance and emotional strength, learning from setbacks and remaining committed to our goals.

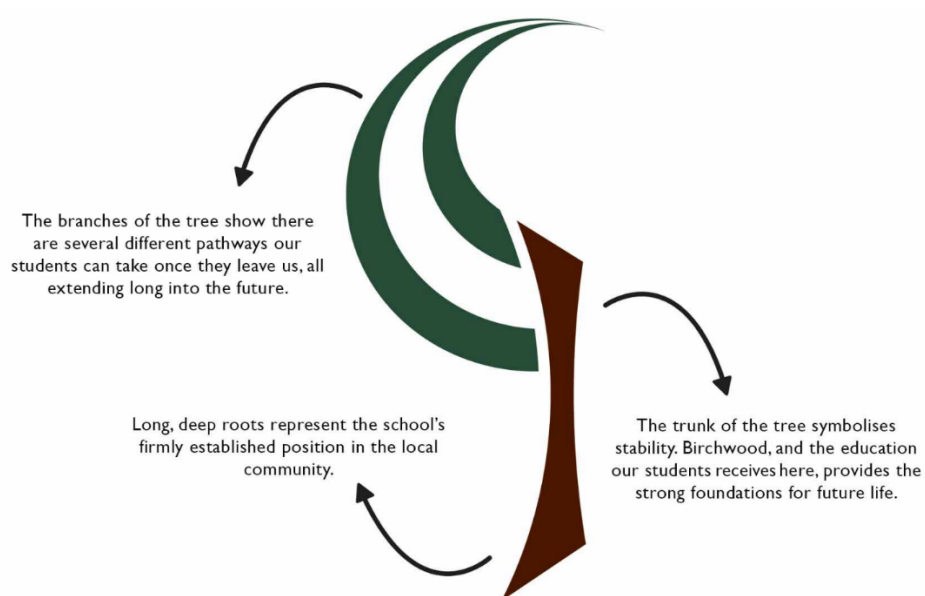
Belonging: We build an inclusive, supportive community where every individual feels valued, safe and proud to be part of Birchwood.

Aspiration: We aim high, embrace challenge and pursue excellence through curiosity, ambition and a love of learning, preparing ourselves for the future.

Respect: We treat everyone with dignity and integrity, value difference, build strong relationships, and do the right thing, even when it is difficult.

Where People Grow and Excellence Prevails

THE BIRCHWOOD LOGO:



NAMES TO KNOW – YEAR 7 TUTOR TEAM

Form

7 ECP

7 TAX

7 TSD

7 BLR

7 PHS

7 MGN

7 SKT

7 BBN

Form Tutor

Mrs Cramp & Miss McDonagh

Mr Asquith-Fox

Mr Sheppard

Mx Lancaster

Mr Hooks

Mr Grogan

Mrs Knight

Miss Beran

NAMES TO KNOW – BIRCHWOOD'S SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



Mr S Griffin
Principal



Mrs J Jacobson
Deputy Principal



Mr C Gilbank
Deputy Principal



Mr R Herbert
**Assistant
Principal**



Mr M Delf
**Assistant
Principal**



Mrs H Walsh
**Assistant
Principal**



Mr G Rome
**Assistant
Principal**



Miss G Willsmore
**Designated
Safeguard Lead**



Mr I Torrance
**Head of
Sixth Form**



Mrs L Jackson
SENCo

THE SCHOOL DAY

The school day starts at 8:40am. Afterschool clubs, rehearsals etc will take place until 4:30pm (unless stated by the member of staff who is running the club).

The School Library is open throughout the day and students are welcome to use it as a quiet space. The Café and seating area are also available from 8:00am.

TERM DATES

Our new Year 7 students will start school on **Thursday 3 September** alongside Year 12.

Dates for your diary:

- Induction Day 2 – Thursday 3 September
- Birchwood Welcome Day – Friday 4 September
- Year 7 Parents’ Evening – Tuesday 2 March

Sep 2026						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Oct 2026						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Nov 2026						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

Dec 2026						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Jan 2027						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Feb 2027						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Mar 2027						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Apr 2027						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May 2027						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Jun 2027						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Jul 2027						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

CPD Days – school closed to students
Student holidays & occasional days
Bank & public holidays
School Open to Yr 7 & 12 only
Birchwood Welcome day with Tutors (compulsory for all Students)
Open Evening
Year 6 Transition Day



ABSENCE PROCEDURE

At Birchwood High School, we strive to ensure that every student has access to their full educational entitlement while working collaboratively with families to address any barriers to attendance. Below, we outline the daily absence procedure, plus, the guidelines for term-time absence requests and lateness.

If your child is unable to attend school

Notify the school before 8:30 am on the morning of the absence.

Please include:

- The reason for the absence.
- How long you expect your child to be off school.

The preferred method of communication is through the Arbor app, or you may call the school and select the absence line option, where you will be able to record a voicemail leaving reasons for your child's absence.

Every day of absence needs to be reported.

DAY 1: Truancy check. A text message will be sent to parents/carers which requires a response. This may well be followed up by a phone call by the school later in the day.

DAY 2: The school will contact you by phone to confirm the reason for absence and discuss a timeline for your child's return to school.

DAY 3: The school will escalate by reaching out via phone and email.

DAY 4: If there is still no response, the school will conduct a welfare check and arrange an Attendance Resolution Meeting to address the absence and any underlying issues.

If you do not notify the school of absence

Lateness

Morning registration is at 8:40am and students arriving after this time will be marked late by their form tutor and will receive a signature on their punctuality card. Form time finishes at 9:00am and registers close at 9:15am.

Students who arrive after 9:00am will arrive to school through visitor reception and will be receive a lunch time detention.

Persistent lateness will prompt discussions with families to identify and address any barriers in a timely attendance.

Term Time Absence Requests

There is no legal entitlement for students to take time off for holidays during the school term.

Applications for term-time absences must be made in writing to the Principal, who will review requests on a case-by-case basis.

Requests should explain why the absence cannot be taken during school holidays.

The absence request form can be found on our website.

ABSENCE

Research shows a clear link between attendance and achievement. Students who attend regularly are more likely to excel academically and access a broader range of opportunities both at school and beyond. Attendance is also vital for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child.

At Birchwood High School, we strive to ensure that every student has access to their full educational entitlement while working collaboratively with families to address any barriers to attendance.

Daily Attendance Procedure

If your child is unable to attend school, please notify the school before 8:30 am on the morning of the absence. The preferred method of communication is through the Arbor app, or you may call the school and select the absence line option, where you will be able to record a voicemail leaving reasons for your child's absence :

- The reason for the absence.
- How long you expect your child to be off school.
- Daily updates are required for each day of absence.

If your child is absent for multiple days, the school may request medical evidence to support the absence.

How to Record an Absence on Arbor:

- Open the Parent Portal on the Arbor App and click on the Quick Actions button. Then select Attendance.
- Click the green Log Absence button in the top-right corner of the page.
- Enter the start and end time for the absence and provide a reason. Adjust the default times as needed.
- Click Log Absence to submit the request.
- Once submitted, the absence will be reviewed by school staff, who will either approve or reject the request. Approved absences will appear in the Attendance section of the Parent Portal and Arbor App.
- If you need to change a submitted absence request, you will need to delete it and log a new request.

Punctuality is an important aspect of maintaining regular attendance:

- Morning registration is at 8:40am and students arriving after this time will be marked late by their form tutor and will receive a signature on their punctuality card. Form time finishes at 9:00am and registers close at 9:15am.
- Students who arrive after 9:00am will arrive to school through visitor reception and will be receive a lunch time detention.
- Persistent lateness will prompt discussions with families to identify and address any barriers



ATTENDANCE PLAN

At Birchwood High School, we are dedicated to helping every child succeed. Regular attendance is key to learning, well-being, and future opportunities. Research clearly links attendance to achievement, showing that students who attend regularly perform better academically and access more opportunities. We are committed to working collaboratively with families to overcome any barriers and ensure every child receives the education they deserve. Below we outline our attendance procedure, working closely with families to provide tailored support.

OUR ATTENDANCE AIM
96%

The school's attendance aim is 96% or above, in line with local authority guidelines. This aim reflects our belief that regular attendance provides students with the best foundation for success. To help all students meet this target, the school implements proactive and supportive measures:

1. Building relationships with families and students and fostering open communication.
2. Creating a safe, supportive, and engaging school environment.
3. Raising awareness about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
4. Monitoring attendance closely and recording reasons for absences promptly.

Step 1: If Attendance Drops to 93%

Families receive an **Attendance Awareness Communication**. This acts to reemphasise the importance of attendance and the school's expectations and highlights to parents that their child's attendance is below where the school would like it to be. It is an early outreach to offer support to identify and address any challenges that may be affecting attendance.

If attendance improves the student's attendance will continue to be monitored as part of the school's regular procedures and no further action is required.

93%

Step 2: If Attendance Drops to 91%

Families are invited to an **Attendance Support Meeting** to collaboratively explore specific barriers to attendance, ensuring an individualised approach to improvement.

If attendance improves the student's attendance will continue to be monitored as part of the school's regular procedures and no further action is required.

91%

Step 3: If Attendance Drops Below 90%

Students are classified as **Persistent Absentees** under government guidelines (missing 10% or more schooling).

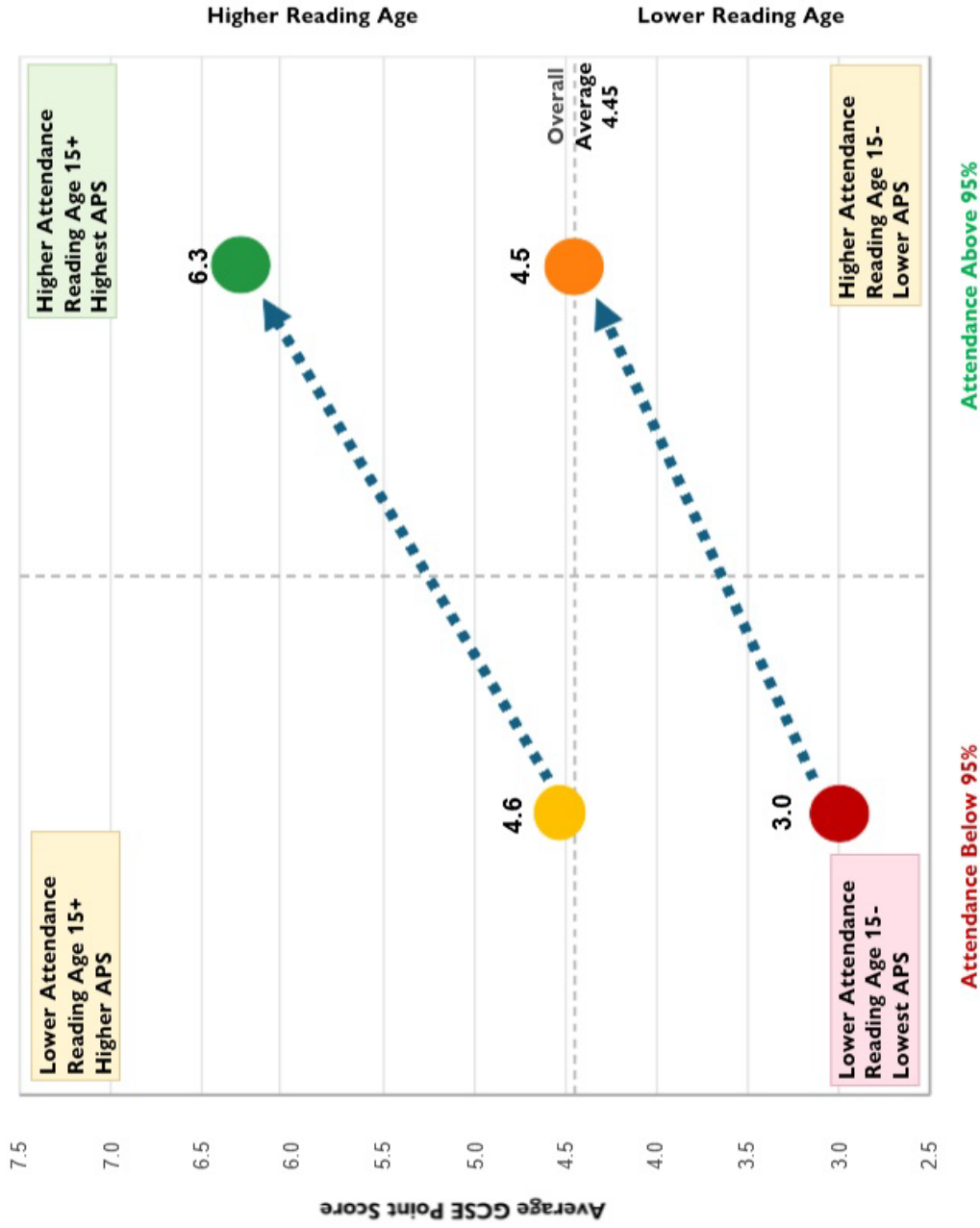
An **Attendance Resolution Meeting** is held with families, focusing on:

- Creating a customised Assess/Plan/Do/Review plan tailored to the child's needs.
- Evaluating the potential need for fines and legal action on a case-by-case basis.

If attendance drops below 50%, students are classified as **Severe Absentees** under government guidelines.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEE
<90%

Attendance and Attainment – All Students



As expected, students with a higher Reading Age achieve a higher average point score but the effect of poor attendance is evident.

For students with a Reading Age over 15, the attainment gap between those who had attendance over 95% and who had attendance below 95% was 1.7 grades.

For those with a Reading Age under 15, the gap was 1.5 grades.

ATTENDANCE

Our aim is for all students to achieve at least **96% attendance**, in line with local authority guidance. This target reflects our belief that regular attendance provides the best foundation for a fulfilling and successful school experience.

Our approach is collaborative, supportive, and focused on building strong partnerships with families.

We appreciate some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these students at Birchwood. However, we will always work with families and students to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced.

Our Attendance Aim

- The school's attendance goal is 96% or above, in line with local authority guidelines.
- This aim reflects our belief that regular attendance provides students with the best foundation for success.

To help all students meet this target, the school implements proactive and supportive measures:

1. Building relationships with families and students, fostering open communication and trust.
2. Creating a safe, supportive, and engaging environment to make school a place students enjoy attending.
3. Raising awareness about the importance of good attendance and punctuality through school communications and events.
4. Monitoring attendance closely and recording reasons for absences promptly to address concerns early.

We are bound by the Local Authority to notify any cases where there are 10 consecutive days of unauthorised absence and 15 consecutive days of medical absence.

BEHAVIOUR

At Birchwood High School, we believe that when all members of our school community work together to create an outstanding learning environment, student success will flourish.

RULES

What do we expect of students in lessons?

- Be Prepared
- Keep your hands, feet and objects to yourself
- Allow teachers to teach and students to learn
- Be engaged and show effort
- Follow instructions without question

BEHAVIOUR SYSTEM (In Lessons)

Staff follow a stepped approach:

Warning → Final Warning → Classroom Consequence → Lesson Removal

Serious incidents may result in an immediate removal.

BASE

BASE is the school's most serious internal sanction and is used for repeated disruption and defiance.

- 1st removal of the day: rest of the period in BASE + same-day lunchtime detention
- 2nd removal of the day: rest of the day in BASE + same-day lunchtime detention

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

At the start of the lesson:

- Students must enter the classroom in an orderly manner and will be checked for correct uniform.
- Students must sit where their teacher's seating plan indicates.
- Students should place books and equipment on the desk. Bags should then be placed on the floor.
- Students should be quiet, attentive and face the teacher before they commence the lesson.

During the lesson:

- Students should not call out during lessons – they should either raise their hands or will be asked to respond individually.
- Students should not leave their desks unless it is a practical lesson or permission has been given.
- Disruptive or uncooperative students will be warned and, where necessary, removed by the teacher.
- Students must not eat and may only drink during lessons when there is a medical reason, or they have been given special permission to do so.

At the end of the lesson:

- There will be a formal dismissal organised by the teacher. Students should look smart ready for the next lesson.
- Chairs should be under the desks and the room left tidy.



TRANSPORT

As an accredited 'Healthy School' Birchwood is committed to improving the health, and monitoring the safety, of all students. To this end, we would wish to encourage students, where possible, to walk, cycle or use public transport in order to reduce the congestion outside the school at peak times. The school car park operates a one-way system with an entrance and an exit gate. The school gates do not open until 3:00pm. Parents should not attempt to drive onto the school site early and wait.

If you have a problem with public transport, you can:

- Contact Hertfordshire County Council at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk and select school admissions which takes you to school admissions and transport. Select transport to school.
- For public transport buses on school routes select 'bus travel' which will take you through to the Intalink Travel Line.
- Apply for a SaverCard to enable your child to get discounted travel on public buses in Hertfordshire (except Transport for London services). The SaverCard costs £20.00 a year for an online application and £25.00 if you apply by post.

If your child receives free school meals, they may be entitled to free transport. Please contact Hertfordshire County Council: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/school-admissions/home-to-school-transport/home-to-school-transport.aspx>

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

From September 2026, the eligibility criteria for Free School Meals (FSM) will be changing. All parents/carers who are in receipt of Universal Credit will be eligible for Free School Meals, regardless of the amount received. In addition, families will now need to register as eligible every year in order to continue to receive free school meals.

Applying takes around 5 minutes, and you will need your National Insurance number. Applications can be made using the following link: [Free school meals and other benefits | Hertfordshire County Council](#).

Students who currently receive Free School Meals from Essex County Council will need to apply through Hertfordshire County Council.

There will be two categories of FSM students from September 2026:

- **Targeted FSM** for families in receipt of Universal Credit with earnings of £7,400 or less (see below). If you are in receipt of Targeted FSM the school may also be able offer help with other costs.
- **Expanded FSM** for families with earnings above the income threshold of £7,400. These students will receive FSM only.

Eligibility for Targeted Free School Meals

Families may be eligible for Targeted Free School Meals where they are in receipt of:

- Universal Credit (with annual household earnings of no more than **£7,400**)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Meet the prescribed criteria for families with no recourse to public funds - [Providing free school meals to families with no recourse to public funds \(NRPF\) - GOV.UK](#)

Applications for the new school year can be made from Monday 1 June 2026.

We encourage you to apply even if you have previously been told you were not eligible.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

The wearing of the Birchwood uniform is expected of students in Years 7-11. If there is any reason why a student cannot wear the correct school uniform, then the student should bring a letter from home explaining why and for how long the situation is expected to last.

Students with a medical condition that prevents them from abiding by our uniform expectations must have a letter from a medical professional explaining as such. Otherwise, students should expect an internal sanction for breach of uniform. A uniform card will be issued by the relevant Head of Year to any student who is not in full uniform for an “acceptable” reason. The card can then be shown to any member of staff who questions the deficiency.

Uniform Items:

- **Blazer:** A maroon fitted blazer with silver braiding and embroidered Birchwood logo.
- **Blouse:** (no tie) or **Shirt:** (with tie): plain white (Must be able to tuck in).
- **Jumper:** Maroon (optional).
- **Skirt:** Knee length tartan skirt.
- **Trousers:** Smart black ‘business suit style’ not to include leggings, jeans, jeggings or other skinny tight fitting fashion trousers.
- **Tie:** Silver with burgundy stripe.
- **Socks/Tights:** Plain black, grey or white ankle or knee length socks or plain black opaque tights.
- **Shoes:** Classic black waterproof school shoes without logo (trainers, plimsolls, sling-backs, high heels, platform shoes and boots are not permitted. Trainers may only be worn for PE).

General Points

- Blazers must be worn at all times unless a teacher gives a student permission to remove it.
- One plain gold/silver stud may be worn in each earlobe only. Rings, necklaces and bracelets/charity bands must not be worn. Nose studs and any other types of facial or body piercing are not permitted.
- Coats/Jackets may only be worn to and from school and outside at lunchtime if it is cold. They should not be worn at any time in the school building. Coats and jackets must be plain and dark. Denim, leather and track-suit type jackets are not acceptable. Jackets with any visible logos, as well as hooded tops, are also not allowed. These and other jackets regarded as unsuitable for school will be confiscated.
- Shirts must be tucked in at all times (front and back).
- Trousers smart black ‘business suit style’ not to include leggings, jeans, jeggings or other skinny tight fitting fashion trousers.
- Shirts must be tucked in at all times (front and back).
- Trousers smart black ‘business suit style’ not to include leggings, jeans, jeggings or other skinny tight fitting fashion trousers.



- Skirts should be worn properly on the waist and should be on the knee. Students are not permitted to roll up their skirts.
- Students are not permitted to adapt their jumpers by, for example, tying them at the back.
- Hair colouring which the school deems as unnatural or a fashionable extreme or shape or style is not permitted. Hair bands are only permitted in black or maroon, they should be plain and be no wider than 3cm.
- Make-up is not allowed in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11 it may be worn discreetly including clear nail varnish. False nails and eyelashes are not acceptable.
- Bags should be plain and dark with no logos or writing on them. They should be large enough to accommodate A4 ring binders and to carry all of each day's books comfortably.
- Students may wear a plain black scarf to and from school and outside at lunchtime if it is cold. Students should not wear scarves in the school buildings.
- In the summer term, Birchwood implements a summer uniform. During this period, students are not required to wear a tie or blazer, and they may also choose to wear a smart pair of school shorts instead of trousers.

UNIFORM CARD

All students will be issued with a Uniform Card, which they must carry with them at all times. This card is a consistent way to track low-level uniform issues across the school.

How it works:

- Staff may ask to see a student's card at any time.
- If a student is not in correct uniform, the member of staff records a strike on the relevant section of the card.
- Each card has a 5 infringements limit.
- On the fifth strike, the student receives a lunchtime detention.
- A new card should then be collected by the student from student reception. The previous card is handed into Student reception by staff.
- Lost cards or refusal to hand over the card will result in a lunchtime detention.

PE Kit

Students basic kit requirements for all lessons are as follows:

- White polo top
- Skort or shorts
- Hooped Birchwood socks for outdoor activities such as rugby, football and hockey or white ankle socks (indoor activities)
- Rugby shirt – where appropriate
- Students are also required to wear shin pads for all football and hockey lessons. They will also require a mouth guard for certain lessons.

During the colder months, we would expect / encourage students to also wear extra layers, as most lessons will be timetabled outdoors. Therefore, it is the students' responsibility to ensure that they are appropriately prepared for their lesson, taking into account the weather.

- Birchwood ¼ zip up jumper
- Plain black leggings or joggers
- Plain black jumper
- Plain black or white base layer, long sleeved under shirt
- Dark-coloured gloves can also be worn, but if playing netball, they must have a rubber-type grip on the fingers/palms

Hooded tops are not permitted.

School Uniform Suppliers

Birchwood High School has two uniform suppliers. Both our uniform suppliers will be hosting pop up shops on Thursday 9 July from 4.30pm – 7:30pm

Esquared Clothing:

<https://myesquared.co.uk/collections/birchwood-high-school>

Birchwood High School uniform can be purchased from Esquared Clothing. Our online store offers a fast and efficient shopping experience for parents. We offer all compulsory uniform as well as uniform bundles, saving up to 15% on your order.

Delivery: As standard, Esquared Clothing will aim to deliver all orders within 1-3 working days.

Exchanges: Too big or too small? As an online retailer, we understand that some items may need to be exchanged. All orders can be exchanged within 1-2 working days.

Sizing: We offer a simple sizing guide on our website that you can use to guide your sizing choices.

Khalsa Schoolwear:

<https://khalsaschoolwear.co.uk/school/birchwood-high-school/>

Birchwood High School uniform can also be purchased from Khalsa Schoolwear. We believe purchasing school uniform should be quick and easy. Shop via our website or visit our pop up on 9 July.

Delivery: We aim to process and dispatch all orders within 2 working days. We recommend for the summer months you allow 3-5 working days for orders to be dispatched.

Exchanges and Refunds: We will accept any returns as long as you notify us within 14 working days from receipt and as long as the item is unworn, in its original packaging and in a saleable condition. You can return any item within 28 days of receipt to exchange it for a different size or colour.

Sizing: A comprehensive “How to Measure” guide can be found on our website.

Preloved Uniform

Please reach out to our PSFA at psfapreloved@gmail.com for more information, pricing, and availability of preloved uniform items. The PSFA offers good-quality second-hand uniform at affordable prices, helping families reduce costs and support sustainable choices. They will be happy to assist with any queries and can advise on current stock.





Birchwood High School

UNIFORM NON-NEGOTIABLES



1

BLAZERS

Must be worn at all times.

2

SHIRTS

Shirts must be tucked in at all times.

3

TIES

Must be worn at all times.



4

SHOES

Must be black leather (or faux leather) school shoes.

5

SKIRTS

Length must be closer to the knee than the waist.

6

JEWELLERY

*One gold/silver stud in each earlobe.
No other jewellery.*

SCHOOL MEALS

We are proud to announce Birchwood High School was awarded 'Healthy School' status and gained five stars in the latest Environmental Health inspection. Our aim is to provide fresh, high-quality food, delivered and prepared on a daily basis, using local suppliers.

We recognise the importance of implementing the Government's School Food Plan for school lunches in order to provide vital steps in fighting child obesity. Together with lessons in Science, Food Technology and PE, we aim to encourage our students to lead healthy lifestyles.

The Catering Department provides a wide choice of meals, including vegetarian options. Visit the Birchwood School website for further information, menus and price lists.

Cashless Catering

At Birchwood we use a four-digit PIN code system for cashless catering. Each student is assigned a unique PIN code that they will use to pay for any items purchased in the Café. This PIN code will be provided in their Induction Day pack as well as emailed directly to parents.

As part of Induction Day activities, students will visit the Café to ensure they are comfortable with how they should use their PIN code.

Any students entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) has the same access to the Café as everyone else, and their daily allowance will automatically be credited to their account. Parents and carers can continue to top up their child's account using ParentPay. If you have any questions regarding FSM and Pupil Premium daily maximum spends, please contact admin@birchwoodhigh.org.uk

Food Allergies & Intolerances

Parents should discuss special dietary requirements or allergies with their child's Form Tutor and the Catering Manager. All menus will have food allergens printed on them, or students can go to the Café Help Desk where advice is available.

Please note that we produce food in a kitchen where allergens are handled and while we try to keep food separate, we cannot guarantee that any item is allergy free.

Packed Lunches

Parents are politely reminded of Birchwood's emphasis on healthy eating. Students should not bring crisps, fizzy drinks and sweets into school.

No chewing gum is permitted on site.



PARENT PAY

At Birchwood High School, we use an online payment system called ParentPay.

ParentPay is an online service that allows parents to make secure and convenient payments by credit/debit card. For more information see www.parentpay.com.

It is our only method of payment.

What does ParentPay do?

- offers a highly secure payment site
- gives you a history of all the payments you have made
- allows you to create a single account login across all your children that attend a ParentPay school
- shows you all items available for payment relevant to each of your children
- emails a receipt of your payment to the email address you register
- offers you the ability to set automated email/SMS payment reminders

How does ParentPay help you?

- gives you the freedom to make payments to school whenever and wherever you like
- stops you having to write cheques or search for cash to send to school
- helps with budgeting; payments can be made at the beginning of the month and held in 'my account' for allocation to the relevant payment item during the month
- allows you to give consent for a trip, as well as allowing you to give contact information when and where required
- payments for the larger value trips can be made by instalments up to the due date
- you will never miss a payment, or have insufficient credit, with automated email/SMS alerts
- ParentPay is quick and easy to use

How do I get started?

- We will give you an activation letter containing your activation details to enable you to set up your ParentPay account
- If you have more than one child at a ParentPay school/s you can add them to a single account, providing one login for all children at ParentPay schools
- Payment items will stay 'live' until they are fully reconciled. Once payment is made we ask that you ignore the item until it is cleared off your payment list

ARBOR

At Birchwood, we use a school management information system called Arbor. The Parent Portal of the Arbor App allows parents and carers to receive communications and update their child's records (for example, a change of address, new medical condition or changes to parents' contact details). The Arbor app is free to download.

It is essential that your email address and mobile matches the records we hold for your child.

Parents using the app will be able to view their child's timetable to help save any last-minute PE kit or cooking ingredient issues, plus view attendance information, House and Behaviour points. All detentions are also logged on Arbor.

If you have any difficulties using Arbor, please contact admin@birchwoodhigh.org.uk. Arbor also provides this instruction manual: <https://support.arbor-education.com/hc/en-us/articles/212097029-A-quick-introduction-to-Arbor-for-guardians-and-parents>

APPS/SOFTWARE TO KNOW

At Birchwood High School, we use a range of systems to keep parents informed and engaged with school life. If you have any questions, please contact admin@birchwoodhigh.org.uk

Below is a quick guide to the key platforms you'll use:



Our main parent portal where you can view your child's attendance, behaviour, progress reports, update details and record absences.



A secure, cashless payment system used for paying for school meals, trips, resources, and other activities.



Our online system for booking appointments for Birchwood Welcome Day



Used to manage extracurricular activities such as sports fixtures, clubs, and trips. View team selections, schedules, and sign up for co-curricular opportunities.



Used to set, mark, and personalise mathematics homework for students aged 11 to 16. It is designed to boost grades by tailoring questions to each student's exact learning pace and ability level.



Microsoft Teams is used as a central digital hub to communicate between students and teachers. Teachers will use it to set Homework and Students can share their schoolwork.

BULLYING

Every student has the right to feel safe at school. It is important that students understand what bullying is and, if it affects them or any other student, how to deal with it.

Bullying is: *the consistent and deliberate actions of a person, or a group of people, designed to hurt the person at whom they are directed. Bullying can be verbal, cyber or physical.*

What should students do if they feel they are being bullied?

- Talk to their Form Tutor or Head of Year as soon as possible.
- Tell a 'buddy' or a peer mentor.

Birchwood will not accept bullying of any kind. If students report bullying, we will:

- Listen carefully and always take them seriously.
- Investigate.
- Talk to the people involved.
- Work with them to help sort out the problem.
- Punish anyone found guilty of bullying and, in the case of cyber bullying, inform the police.

By ignoring or tolerating bullying the situation will not change. The same applies to internet and cyber bullying. Below are some great websites to help you and your child

- www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/
- www.internetmatters.org

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

Birchwood is a comprehensive school, which means it is for everybody. We believe everyone has the right to equal chances, regardless of gender, race or ability. All students at Birchwood are equally important. We live in a multicultural society, and we learn from many different cultures and beliefs. We will not tolerate discrimination against anyone because of their race, gender, colour, beliefs, or nationality. Everyone follows the same curriculum and girls and boys are entitled to the same opportunities in all aspects of school life.

Please report any negative comment about race, gender, colour, belief, or nationality to a teacher.

- If students feel unfairly excluded from an activity, they need to tell an adult they trust.
- If students are criticised because of their gender, they need to tell an adult they trust.
- If students are criticised because of their ability, they need to tell an adult they trust.
- If students are criticised because of their appearance, they need to tell an adult they trust.

PSHCE

Our PSHCE and Relationships & Sex Education (RSE) programme is designed to support the personal development and wellbeing of every student. Rooted in a strong moral and social framework, our curriculum meets all statutory government requirements while fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment.

PSHCE is delivered through a combination of dedicated lessons and wider curriculum links, helping students to explore and understand their values, emotions, relationships and roles in society. Our approach equips students with the knowledge and skills they need to lead healthy, confident and responsible lives, both now and in the future.

Our curriculum is broad and balanced, promoting students' spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development. It covers three key strands:

- Health & Wellbeing – including physical and mental health, safety, change and personal development.
- Relationships – focusing on healthy relationships, emotional literacy, equality, and managing risks.
- Living in the Wider World – preparing students to be informed, active citizens with a sense of responsibility and financial awareness.

We use the Jigsaw Programme to ensure a structured PSHCE education across all year groups. Through this, students are encouraged to understand the impact of their actions and grow into thoughtful members of their community.

Our full PSHCE policy is available on the Policies page of our website and provides more detailed information.

LITERACY

At Birchwood High School, we believe that strong literacy skills are the foundation for success across every subject. Our whole-school approach to literacy is designed to help students become confident readers, articulate speakers, and capable writers—fully prepared for academic achievement and life beyond the classroom. We use a range of strategies to embed and promote literacy across the curriculum:

Library Induction and Access: All students take part in library induction sessions, where our dedicated librarian leads engaging activities that encourage exploration of different genres and teach students how to use academic cataloguing systems effectively.

Form Tutor Reading: Regular reading sessions during tutor time promote reading for pleasure and expose students to a wide variety of texts. These sessions also model fluent, expressive reading, helping to build students' confidence and comprehension.

Paired Reading Scheme: This targeted initiative provides one-to-one reading support to help students develop fluency, improve comprehension, and gain confidence in their reading abilities.

Echo Reading: In these structured one-to-one sessions, students mirror the fluent reading of a skilled adult. This technique helps students improve their pronunciation, expression, and pacing, while also developing comprehension through discussion and questioning.



Writing Mastery: A key component of our Key Stage 3 curriculum, Writing Mastery explicitly teaches grammar, punctuation, and sentence construction. This structured approach ensures all students build strong foundations in written communication.

Reading for Pleasure and Critical Reading: Our Key Stage 3 English curriculum includes dedicated lessons focused on reading whole novels and developing critical reading skills. These sessions encourage deep comprehension, analytical thinking, and engagement with more complex texts.

We also value the vital role that families play in supporting literacy. Parents and carers can help nurture a love of reading and language at home by:

- Reading aloud with your child and discussing what you've read together
- Exploring new vocabulary in context
- Talking about characters, themes, and ideas in your child's reading
- Encouraging regular visits to the library
- Demonstrating your own enjoyment of reading

THE ROLE OF THE FORM TUTOR

At Birchwood High School, students are organised in form groups. There are 8 form groups in each year. Tutors are the first point of contact for students and parents and carers. They see their form every day at morning registration and are able to monitor progress, achievement, behaviour and any friendship issues. Tutors get to know students as individuals and are there to support them in times of difficulty and intervene to support students when necessary.

Tutors oversee the progress and pastoral care of those students in their tutor groups. Whilst tutors will deal with minor issues to do with achievement and behaviour, Heads of Year will deal with more serious or prolonged concerns.

Your child's Head of Year will be Mrs Hinski.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SCHOOL

Letters

All school letters and communications are sent home via email. These will also be added to the school's website, under the header '**News, Letters & Social Media**'.

Newsletters

Each Monday, we share our parent newsletter, The Birchwood Bulletin. This is filled with real-time updates, event notifications, and key information.

Social Media:

Follow us on social media for everyday updates:

<https://www.facebook.com/birchwoodhighschool/>

<https://www.instagram.com/birchwoodbishopsstortford/>

<https://www.instagram.com/birchwood6thform/>

Reports

Subject teachers report on the student progress a minimum of twice a year. This is viewable online via the Arbor app.

Tutor's Report

The Tutor's Report summarises the students' overall behaviour and achievements at the end of the school year. If you have any concerns during the year, please don't hesitate to contact the school using admin@birchwoodhigh.org.uk

Parents' Evening

During the Spring term there will be a Year 7 Parents' Evening. This has provisionally been set for Tuesday 2 March. This is will be held at school with appointments booked online. You will receive communication closer to the time with more details and instructions on how to use our online booking system, Parents Booking.

MOBILE PHONES & ELECTRONIC DEVICES

At Birchwood High School, we are committed to creating an environment where all students can fully focus on their learning and personal development.

In line with current government guidance, any student who brings a mobile phone to school will be required to place it in their own locking pouch at the start of the school day. The pouch will remain in the student's possession throughout the school day; however, it will stay securely locked until 3:15pm. Pouches can only be opened using designated unlocking points located at the front of the school site.

This approach ensures that mobile phones are stored safely, reduces the risk of loss, damage or misuse, and supports a calm, focused learning environment for all students. While students remain responsible for bringing their phone to school, once on site it must be secured in the pouch and kept locked until dismissal.

Students who do not comply with this expectation will be subject to sanctions in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

We kindly ask parents and carers not to contact their child directly via mobile phone during school hours. If you need to pass on a message, particularly one that is urgent or time-sensitive, please contact the Reception Team, who will ensure that the information is communicated promptly and appropriately.

RESPONSIBLE USE OF IT:

At Birchwood High School, we are committed to fostering a safe and responsible digital environment. Our ICT Acceptable Use Policy can be found on the Policies page of our website.

Students are expected to:

- Use school ICT systems responsibly to ensure their safety and the security of the systems.
- Keep usernames and passwords secure and not share them with others.
- Use school systems for educational purposes and seek permission for any personal use.
- Respect others' work and property by not accessing or altering other users' files without permission.
- Be cautious when communicating online and avoid sharing personal information.
- Communicate online using polite, respectful language and consider their tone in all digital interactions.
- Report any unpleasant or inappropriate material or messages encountered online.

We encourage parents and carers to support these principles at home by:

- Discussing the importance of responsible online behaviour and digital etiquette with your child.
- Monitoring your child's use of technology and online activities.
- Ensuring that your child understands the school's expectations regarding ICT use.
- Using social media and messaging platforms respectfully when communicating about school matters.



CONTACTING THE SCHOOL

To ensure that communications are efficient, secure and properly directed, please follow the steps below when contacting the school:

Step 1: Use our central email address admin@birchwoodhigh.org.uk

This applies to **all contact**, including messages for:

- Form Tutors
- Subject Teachers
- Heads of Year
- Support Staff
- General enquiries

Step 2: Include clear details in your message

- Your child's full name and form group
- The name of the staff member you think your message is intended for
- A clear subject or brief explanation

Step 3: For confidential matters

If your message contains sensitive or confidential information, please include:

, Confidential Information Included or FAO [Staff Member's Name]"

Why we use this system:

- All emails are monitored by trained Reception staff during school hours
- Messages are quickly forwarded to the correct staff member
- The system is secure and helps us manage and respond to high volumes of communication effectively
- It ensures consistency and protects staff from direct, unmanaged, and unprofessional contact

We aim to respond to parental communication in a timely and professional manner. The following guidelines apply:

- Non-urgent enquiries: You can expect a reply within two working days.
- Urgent matters (e.g. safeguarding or student welfare concerns): These are prioritised and we aim to respond on the same day or the next working day.
- More complex issues (e.g. SEND queries, behavioural incidents): You will receive an acknowledgement within two working days, with a more detailed response typically provided within 5–10 working days, depending on the nature of the concern.

LOST PROPERTY

Birchwood High School cannot accept responsibility for any lost items. Any lost property items are kept at Student Reception (by the library), while lost PE kits are held in the PE office. For any enquiries, please contact:

admin@birchwoodhigh.org.uk.

THE MEDICAL ROOM

Birchwood has a number of trained first aiders who are the first point of contact for any minor injuries or medical concerns that arise while students are at school. They are responsible for assessing and managing these situations promptly and appropriately. Our medical assistant is available to offer health advice, provide support for students with long-term medical conditions, and help coordinate care where necessary. Parents are encouraged to keep the school informed of any ongoing health needs and to ensure that emergency contact details and medical information are up to date via Arbor.

Students must always seek permission from a member of staff before going to the Medical Room. Unless it is an emergency, they should not attend without a signed note. This helps ensure all cases are properly recorded and dealt with efficiently.

EXTREME WEATHER CLOSURE PROCEDURE

In the event of extreme weather conditions, Birchwood High School carefully considers the safety of students and staff before making any decision to close the school. A decision will be made by 6:00am on the day, based on a thorough assessment of the health and safety risks. Should the school need to close, an official notice will be posted as early as possible on the school website and Facebook page and via parent email.

Parents and carers are advised to check these platforms for up-to-date information.

EQUIPMENT

We aim to ensure that students become independent and responsible for themselves. They will need to bring all of the following equipment to school with them, every day:

- A pen with black or blue ink
- Green Biro pen for responding to teacher marking
- Pencil
- Highlighter pen
- Glue stick
- Rubber
- Pair of compasses
- Pencil sharpener
- 15cm or 30cm ruler
- Calculator
- Protractor

For Food Preparation & Nutrition lessons, students are expected to bring a white apron. This can be purchased from any retailer and does not need to be branded.

Students should pack their bag every evening, checking against their timetable that they have everything required for the following day.

HOMELEARNING:

The amount of home learning students receive will depend on their year and the subjects they are studying. Home Learning should be accessed through Microsoft Teams classes, where teachers will set home learning assignments. This platform allows students to manage their home learning effectively as they are able to see deadlines, attachments and contact their teachers through the platform.

To use Microsoft Teams effectively all students should download the app to their devices. Log in details will be given to your child on their Induction day in September. Parents are provided with a weekly email that summarises the current home learning assignments due.

Home learning is an important part of school life, it enables students to practise working on their own and to help develop the skills needed at Birchwood and later in life.

Parents and carers should help by:

- Taking an interest in the work your child is set.
- Helping where appropriate.
- Making sure home learning is done on time.



SUMMER PROJECTS

To help make the transition to secondary school a little more engaging (and a lot more fun!), our subject faculties have put together a Summer Projects Booklet. This includes a range of light, creative, and curiosity-sparking activities that students can dip into over the summer holidays. We suggest students pick three subjects that interest them and choose a couple of tasks from each to try out.

We'd love students to bring their completed tasks with them on their second induction day.

Please see a QR code link to these summer project below. There is also a link on the Year 6 Transitions page of our website.



EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

At Birchwood High we offer a diverse range of extracurricular clubs and co curriculum opportunities that aim to enhance your child's overall learning experience.

Each term, our teachers design a variety of clubs that cater to diverse interests and aptitudes. The extracurricular timetable is posted on the school website in the first week of each term. Our extracurricular clubs are managed via an app called SOCs.

Visit the Co-Curriculum page of our website to discover activities and ideas chosen by each of our faculties to help students get inspired. You'll find suggestions for things to **Watch, Listen, Read, Go, and Do.**

MUSIC

Here at Birchwood, we are keen to support and nurture young musicians. Currently we have many students enjoying music lessons learning flute, piano, saxophone, clarinet, guitar, drums, trumpet, trombone and singing. Learning an instrument is a great way to gain confidence and take part in the many concerts and extra-curricular activities that we can offer at Birchwood.

We can offer tuition on all the main musical instruments and singing as well as a 25% subsidy for students playing an orchestral instrument who start Birchwood with Grade 2 (to take advantage of these subsidies, please send or email Mr Grogan a copy of the relevant Grade Certificate). Furthermore, all GCSE and A Level students receive a 25% subsidy towards fees. If you are eligible for free school meals you may also benefit from a bursary award through Herts Music Service see website for details - <https://www.hertsmusicservice.org.uk/music-lessons-in-hertfordshire/help-with-music-fees.aspx>

How to apply:

Any instrument or singing, please visit the Herts Music Service website and complete their application process

<http://www.hertsmusicservice.org.uk/registeronline>.

Please be aware of the following important points regarding music lessons:

- Invoicing is termly with one term's notice to stop.
- Lesson times are displayed on the notice board in the Music Department corridor. Times are rotated each week, and it is the student's responsibility to attend lessons on time and to inform teachers if they are going to be away.
- Teachers do try to make up lessons missed due to trips, exams and illness but this is not always possible.

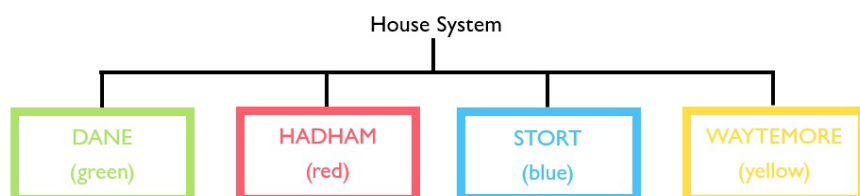
If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact

mgrogan@birchwoodhigh.org.uk.

THE HOUSE SYSTEM

Birchwood's House System is an important part of school life built upon our values.

Each tutor group is placed in one of the four houses. There are two forms per house in each year. Each House is led by a team of Sixth Formers; including two Head House Captains and two Deputy House Captains who organise the House activities and events.



During the year, students will earn house points for displaying behaviour in keeping with our Birchwood values: kindness, contribution, effort, mastery and progress. everyone has an opportunity to earn points for their House

They will have the chance to participate in a range of competitions and events that will allow them to contribute to the success of their House.

The annual 'House Cup' winner is announced at the end of the summer term and is awarded to the House with the highest net house points (house points minus behaviour points).

PSFA

The Birchwood PSFA brings together parents, carers, staff, and friends of the school who are passionate about supporting our students and enriching school life.

Our goals are to:

- Organise fun and inclusive events
- Build strong links with local businesses
- Raise funds to support school initiatives

Joining the PSFA is a fantastic way to meet other parents and become more involved in the school community.

If you'd like to join our volunteer mailing list, please email us at: birchwoodpsfa@gmail.com

Birchwood Bonus Ball: The Bonus Ball is a monthly raffle-style fundraiser. You can purchase up to 5 numbers per month at £3 each. This year, the monthly prize has been £177! To take part, email us with your name and contact number: treasurerbwpsfa@gmail.com

Birchwood Futures Foundation: The Birchwood Futures Foundation is a parent-led fund that helps provide additional resources to enhance students' educational experiences. Even a small monthly donation can make a big difference. Donations are voluntary and can be made via ParentPay.

EasyFundraising: Support Birchwood every time you shop online—at no extra cost to you! Over 8,000 retailers (including eBay, Argos, John Lewis, ASOS, Booking.com, and M&S) will donate a percentage of your purchase to us through EasyFundraising.

- Visit: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/birchwood-parents-staff-and-friends-association/> and join for free.
- Start your shopping from the EasyFundraising site.
- After checkout, the retailer donates to Birchwood—at no extra cost to you!

Thanks to parental support, the PSFA has helped fund a wide range of projects, including:

- An all-weather cricket wicket for home matches
- Blackout curtains in the gymnasium
- Duke of Edinburgh expedition gear: tents, rucksacks, mats, and a large event shelter
- £1,000 towards new science equipment
- A permanent canopy outside the Café
- VEX IQ robotics kits for STEM learning
- New saucepans for Food Technology
- Geography fieldwork tools: rulers, measuring tapes, and quadrats
- A motivational speaker to support student wellbeing
- A trip to the Big Bang Science Fair at the NEC for Science Club students

Follow us on Facebook: **Birchwood Parents Staff and Friends Association (PSFA)**



Parsonage Lane,
Bishop's Stortford
Hertfordshire
CM23 5BD

admin@birchwoodhigh.org.uk

01279 655936

www.birchwoodhighschool.co.uk

