



Birchwood High School History and Background Information

Birchwood High School is a forward-thinking, co-educational Academy (11-18) and, as a high performing specialist school, has the added benefits of both Technology and Sports College status. There are currently 1,400 students on roll and numbers are expected to rise to 1,500 students over the next two years, given the school's popularity within the local community, the rapid growth of both nearby Stansted Airport and the town of Bishop's Stortford.

What is Ofsted's view of Birchwood High School? *"Birchwood High is a good school. There are a number of good outcomes for students that help them develop into mature, confident, and personable young adults. The proportion of Year 11 students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics was above average. Year-on-year, this proportion has improved since the last inspection"* (Ofsted 2010.)

This most recent inspection paints a picture of a school that has come a long way but has done so in a sustainable way, focusing on year-on-year improvement. As for the future, *"There is confidence in the school's good capacity for further improvement."* We believe we are on target to be outstanding and it is the school's collective drive that will ensure we achieve our goal.

The school serves Bishop's Stortford and the surrounding villages in Hertfordshire and Essex. The school caters for the full range of ability. Our recent GCSE percentage of 5 A* - C was 72% with targets for over 80% for the next two years. Post-16 results are consistently high; over 100% A-E pass rate was recorded this year.

The school provides a modern and contemporary working environment for staff, with a strong CPD culture throughout the school and widely distributed leadership. Individuals feel empowered to make a difference, and our staff turnover is relatively low. It is well looked after by the staff and students and extensively used by the general public during evenings and weekends. It is often said by new staff that both teaching and non-teaching colleagues are very supportive of each other. I would echo this sentiment.

The school has expanded so that each year now operates with eight forms of entry. Our intake profile points to the fact that each incoming Year 7 group has ever-increasing numbers of able students whilst retaining our comprehensive non-selective ethos. This is why our GCSE predictions show an upward trend, as will our Sixth Form numbers. To support school growth, £18m of capital build investment has taken place with facilities including a Sixth Form Centre, a Teacher Resource Centre, a sports complex and a stunning new school entrance with a Maths, Library and English suite.

Birchwood is the lead player in the local area in terms of collaboration, coordinating a joint 14-19 curriculum, sports partnership and leadership development.

The school is well supported by parents with over 90% attendance rates at Parents' Evenings. It is well served by its Governors whose efforts to develop the school and site is much appreciated. The Parents' Society has been involved in all aspects of the running of the school, educational as well as fund-raising.

You will find Birchwood a friendly, supportive and ambitious Academy. Our staff are open and sociable, the students appreciative of what we are trying to do. It is also a vibrant and improving school, and one in which we are making a real difference to the lives of young people.

Chris Ingate
Headteacher