



## Birchwood High School Curriculum Policy 2025 - 2026

### Our Mission

At Birchwood we are part of something special, welcoming all, supporting all and encouraging all.

Enjoying together the exploration of ideas,  
the excitement of learning and the celebration of our achievements,  
in a school where we feel safe.

*“Your dreams, your future, our challenge”*

We aim to offer a thoughtful and ambitious approach to education, emphasising a balanced, engaging, and holistic curriculum that nurtures academic success, personal growth, and lifelong learning. At its core, the curriculum is designed to provide students with not only the foundational knowledge needed to excel academically but also the cultural and intellectual capital that prepares them for the future.

### **Mission and Vision**

Our mission is one of a nurturing, inclusive environment where every student is supported and encouraged. Birchwood values the exploration of ideas, the excitement of learning, and the celebration of achievement in a school that feels safe and welcoming. This mission extends into the curriculum, where the National Curriculum is recognised as a strong starting point for providing a broad, balanced education that supports the spiritual, moral, cultural, and intellectual development of students.

### **Curriculum Intent**

At the heart of Birchwood's curriculum is the focus on building a strong foundation of knowledge, paired with the development of skills needed to understand, interpret, and apply that knowledge. The curriculum design ensures that students transition smoothly through different stages of their education. Each step is carefully planned, enabling students to build confidence, gain competence, and successfully navigate their path from Year 7 through to adult life. This approach recognises that success in education is not only about academic performance but also about the development of a well-rounded individual capable of contributing to society.

### **Teacher Expertise and Recruitment**

At Birchwood, the role of the teacher is paramount. The school places significant emphasis on recruiting, training, and retaining high-quality teachers who are passionate about their subjects. These teachers, who are subject experts, bring their enthusiasm and knowledge into the classroom, engaging and inspiring students to think critically and explore the subjects they teach. The school recognises that subject specialist teachers are essential to providing a curriculum that is not only challenging but also inspiring.

### **Broad Curriculum Offer**



Birchwood's curriculum is broad and inclusive. From Key Stage 3, where students study a wide array of subjects including English, Maths, Science, and Modern Foreign Languages, to Key Stage 4, where students are offered a range of GCSE options, Birchwood ensures that students receive a well-rounded education. The curriculum offers subjects from the 'English Baccalaureate' suite, including languages and humanities, but also places high value on creative subjects like Art, Music, Drama, and Design Technology. This reflects the school's belief that all areas of learning are important and should be celebrated.

As students progress to Key Stage 4, they are offered a choice of nine or ten GCSEs, ensuring they maintain a rich and balanced curriculum. The school's diverse range of options, including business studies, computer science, and physical education, ensures that there is something for every student. This is complemented by comprehensive information, advice, and guidance (CEIAG) for both students and parents, empowering them to make informed choices about their academic futures.

### **Post-16 Opportunities**

Birchwood's commitment to a broad curriculum continues into the Sixth Form, where students are presented with a wide range of subjects, including both traditional academic routes like Maths and Business, and more niche subjects like E-Sports, German, and French. This diverse offer ensures that students can continue to pursue their passions while also preparing for future academic or vocational success.

### **Extra-Curricular and Enrichment Activities**

The school places great importance on extra-curricular activities, which are seen as integral to the curriculum. Opportunities for students to engage in sports, music, drama, and a variety of clubs enrich their educational experience and help develop leadership, teamwork, and resilience. For example, Birchwood's extra-curricular sport programme is built around the principle of "Sport for All," with numerous clubs in team and individual sports. These activities not only offer students the chance to hone their skills but also provide valuable life experiences outside the classroom. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and various school productions, such as musical and theatrical performances, provide students with opportunities to develop their talents and explore their interests. Birchwood also offers a range of educational trips, from local geography fieldwork to international language trips, further enhancing students' learning and broadening their horizons.

### **Curriculum Implementation**

To bring this rich and diverse curriculum to life, Birchwood employs a strategic approach to implementation. The school continuously reviews and refines its curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of each cohort, adapts to the changing world, and builds on the foundation set in Key Stage 2. Subject-specific pedagogy is delivered by experts in each field, ensuring that teaching is not only engaging but also of the highest quality.

Personalisation is a key element of the curriculum implementation. Teachers tailor their approach to suit the diverse needs of students, ensuring that each child's learning journey is challenging yet appropriate. This personalised approach is supported by ongoing professional development for staff, ensuring that teachers remain at the forefront of effective curriculum delivery.



### Key Stage 3 Curriculum

At Key Stage 3, Birchwood’s curriculum is designed to build solid foundations in a wide range of subjects. In Years 7 to 9, students study English, Mathematics, Science, a Modern Foreign Language, and Physical Education, alongside PSHCE. The curriculum is carefully sequenced so that by the end of Year 8, students have covered the full range of National Curriculum content in subjects such as Geography, History, Computing, and the arts. This progression ensures that students are well-prepared for their GCSE studies and beyond.

### Conclusion

#### Year 7 and 8

Subject	English	Maths	Science	PE	PSHCE	Drama	Art	Music	History	Geography	RS	Technology	Food	MFL
Hrs/Wk	4	3	3	2.5	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	2.5	0.5	3

The structure and allocation of time in Birchwood High School’s curriculum are designed to ensure that every student receives a well-rounded education, with a clear emphasis on both academic and personal development. Below is an overview of how time is allocated across subjects for Key Stage 3:

#### Subject Time Allocation at Key Stage 3

- English (4 hours per week)**  
 A strong emphasis is placed on literacy development in the early years of secondary school. By dedicating four hours per week to English, the school ensures that students can develop their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, which are critical to their success across all areas of learning.
- Mathematics (3 hours per week)**  
 Mathematics is a core subject with a core entitlement of three hours each week. This allocation reflects the importance of building strong numerical and problem-solving skills that students will carry with them throughout their education and into adult life.
- Science (3 hours per week)**  
 Similarly, Science receives three hours per week to ensure that students develop a solid understanding of the scientific principles that underpin the world around them. The aim is to provide students with a foundation for future learning in both academic and vocational contexts.
- Physical Education (2.5 hours per week)**  
 The importance of physical education is emphasized with 2.5 hours of weekly lessons. This time is designed to support students' physical development, foster teamwork and resilience, and promote a healthy lifestyle, which is key to their overall well-being.
- Expressive & Performing Arts (3 hours per week)**  
 Art, Music, and Drama are each allocated one hour per week, totalling three hours for the Expressive & Performing Arts. This allocation underlines the school’s commitment to



developing students' creativity, self-expression, and appreciation for the arts. These subjects also foster emotional intelligence and social skills.

- **Modern Foreign Languages (3 hours per week)**  
All students are required to study Modern Foreign Languages for three hours per week. In Year 7, French is taught as the core language, with the opportunity to add Spanish or German later in the year. The aim is to build foundational language skills that promote cultural understanding and open doors to global opportunities.
- **Technology (2.5 hours per week)**  
Technology education, which includes subjects like Design and Technology, is allocated 2.5 hours per week. This ensures that students gain practical, hands-on experience in areas such as engineering, design, and innovation, equipping them with skills applicable to a range of careers. Additionally, **Food Technology** is allocated an additional 0.5 hours per week to ensure that all students receive a balanced education in this practical subject.
- **Humanities (3 hours per week)**  
Humanities subjects—History, Geography, and Religious Studies (RS)—are all studied equally, with a total of three hours per week. The school believes in giving students a broad understanding of the world around them, helping them to make sense of different cultures, histories, and global issues.
- **PSHCE (Personal, Social, Health, and Citizenship Education)**  
All students receive statutory PSHCE teaching, delivered in their form groups. This is an integral part of the curriculum, focusing on personal well-being, social responsibility, and preparing students to be active, informed members of society.



## Year 9 Curriculum Structure and Pathways at Birchwood High School

In Year 9, Birchwood High School continues to provide a strong, broad, and balanced curriculum that encourages academic achievement while allowing for personal interests and aspirations. The curriculum structure is designed to provide a solid foundation while offering students flexibility in selecting subjects based on their preferences and future goals.

Subject	English	Maths	Science	PE	PSHCE	Ebacc Suite 1	Ebacc Suite 2	Creative Suite 1	Creative Suite 2	Open Choice	Open Choice
Hrs/Wk	4	3	3	2	0.5	2	2	2	2	2	2

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### Core Curriculum Components

The **Core Curriculum** in Year 9 is designed to build on the foundational knowledge and skills developed in Key Stage 3, providing students with a rich and comprehensive academic experience. Key elements include:

- English** (4 hours per week):  
 English remains a central subject in the curriculum with 4 hours allocated each week to ensure comprehensive coverage of language and literature. This focus helps to support students in developing strong literacy skills, which are essential across all areas of the curriculum and for their future academic and professional success.
- Mathematics** (3 hours per week):  
 Mathematics continues with a core entitlement of 3 hours each week. This subject is fundamental in equipping students with the critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed in both academic and real-world settings.
- Science** (3 hours per week):  
 Science, with its broad focus on Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, remains central to the curriculum, providing students with a strong grounding in the scientific principles that shape the world around them. This includes 3 hours of teaching per week, helping to build students' understanding and critical thinking skills in science.
- Physical Education** (2 hours per week):  
 Physical Education plays an important role in the development of both physical and mental well-being. Students receive 2 hours of PE per week to help them develop fitness, teamwork, and resilience, while also encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle.
- PSHCE (Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education)**:  
 All students receive PSHCE lessons in their form groups, promoting their personal development, well-being, and understanding of important life skills. This subject helps to



ensure that students are prepared for life beyond school, with a focus on social, emotional, and health education.

### **Subject Pathways: Ebacc and Creative Suite**

In Year 9, students are required to select their pathways from two broad suites of subjects: the **Ebacc Suite** and the **Creative Suite**. This structure ensures that students receive a balanced education while allowing them to pursue their individual interests.

#### **1. The Ebacc Suite**

This suite includes subjects that are traditionally seen as academic and are valued by universities and employers. These subjects help to provide a well-rounded education and are essential for students planning to follow a more traditional academic route:

- **Modern Foreign Languages** (French, German, Spanish)
- **Humanities** (History, Geography, Religious Studies)
- **Computer Science**

Students must select a minimum of **2 options** from the Ebacc suite to ensure a broad academic foundation, preparing them for future opportunities.

#### **2. The Creative Suite**

The Creative Suite offers students the opportunity to pursue subjects that foster creativity, practical skills, and personal interests. These subjects not only enrich the curriculum but also allow students to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills. Subjects in the Creative Suite include:

- **Expressive & Performing Arts** (Art, Music, Drama, Dance)
- **Design and Technology** (including Food Technology)

Students are required to select a minimum of **2 options** from the Creative Suite, ensuring they can develop both their creative and practical skills.

### **Curriculum Flexibility**

While the core structure of the curriculum is set, there is also a **degree of flexibility** to support individual needs and aspirations:

- **Languages:** Students who wish to continue studying **two languages** (for example, French and Spanish or French and German) can opt for this option, provided it aligns with their interests and future academic plans.
- **Adapted Curriculum:** For students who may require additional support or a more tailored approach, there is the possibility of an **adapted curriculum**. This ensures that every student can access the full range of educational opportunities while meeting their personal and academic needs.



## Year 10 /11 Curriculum Structure at Birchwood High School

In Year 10/11, students at Birchwood High School begin their Key Stage 4 education, where the focus shifts to more specialised learning through Level 2 courses, including GCSE, BTEC, and OCR qualifications. The curriculum is designed to ensure that all students receive a rigorous academic education while allowing them to make choices based on their interests, strengths, and future aspirations.

Subject	English	Maths	Science	PE	PSHCE	EBACC Suite 1	Open Choice 1	Open Choice 2	Open Choice 3
Hrs/Wk	4	4	4.5	2	0.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5

### Core Curriculum Components

The Core Curriculum remains comprehensive and foundational, ensuring all students receive a well-rounded education with a focus on the key academic subjects.

1. English (4 hours per week):  
English continues to be a central part of the curriculum, with 4 hours of teaching per week. This ensures that all students develop strong literacy skills, a deep understanding of literature, and the ability to communicate effectively—skills which are valuable across all subject areas and essential for future success.
2. Mathematics (4 hours per week):  
Mathematics is allocated 4 hours of teaching per week. This ensures students have enough time to cover the full breadth of the curriculum and develop the necessary skills for both GCSE exams and real-world application. The focus is on building both problem-solving skills and deeper mathematical understanding.
3. Science (4.5 hours per week):  
Science is a critical area of study and is allocated 4.5 hours per week. This increased time allocation reflects the demanding nature of the subject at the GCSE level, particularly for students studying Trilogy Science (combined Science) or Triple Science (separate Biology, Chemistry, and Physics) courses. The extra time ensures that all required content is thoroughly covered and that students have the support they need to succeed in their exams.
4. Physical Education (2 hours per week):  
Physical Education remains a key part of the curriculum, with 2 hours per week dedicated to physical development, fitness, teamwork, and well-being. Physical education at this stage continues to encourage healthy lifestyle choices and the development of teamwork and resilience.
5. PSHCE (Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education):  
All students will continue to receive PSHCE lessons in their form groups, addressing personal well-being, social skills, and citizenship education. This subject helps students understand their role in society and prepares them for the challenges of adult life, including mental health, relationships, and life choices.

### Subject Pathways: Ebacc and Open Choice

The curriculum in Year 10/11 provides students with both compulsory core subjects and the opportunity to select subjects from two distinct pathways: the Ebacc Suite and the Open Choice.

1. Ebacc Suite  
The Ebacc Suite includes subjects that are considered core academic subjects, valued by universities



and employers. Students are required to select a minimum of 1 option from this suite. Subjects in the Ebacc Suite include:

- Modern Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish)
- Humanities (History, Geography)
- Computer Science

This ensures that all students are studying a broad academic curriculum that includes both language and humanities, which are essential for a well-rounded education.

## 2. Open Choice

The Open Choice pathway offers a range of additional subjects from which students can select 3 options. This allows students to tailor their curriculum to their interests and future career aspirations. The Open Choice includes a wide range of subjects from either the Ebacc or the Open Options shown below

### Curriculum Flexibility

Birchwood High School recognizes that every student has unique needs, and therefore there is flexibility in the curriculum to support those who may require an adapted program:

- Adapted Curriculum: Students who require additional support or have specific learning needs will receive tailored support. This ensures that all students can access a curriculum that suits their individual learning styles and needs, allowing them to achieve success.

### Available Subjects

Core	Ebacc	Open	
English Language English Literature Maths Science – Trilogy and Triple	History Geography French Spanish German Computer Science	PE Music Art Drama Dance Statistics	Religious Studies Media or Film Studies Design Technology Food ICT Btec or Computing Business Studies



## **Birchwood High School - Key Stage 5 (Years 12 and 13) Curriculum Overview**

The Key Stage 5 curriculum at Birchwood High School is designed to provide students with a challenging and diverse range of academic opportunities, preparing them for future success in Higher Education, Apprenticeships, or aspirational employment. The curriculum is flexible and responds to student demand, allowing us to meet the diverse needs of all students. It combines academic excellence, personal support, and leadership development.

### **Curriculum Structure: Year 12 and Year 13**

Over the course of two years (Year 12 and Year 13), students will follow a curriculum that allows students to tailor their studies to their interests and career aspirations.

- **A Levels:** A wide range of A Level courses are offered, providing a strong academic platform for students planning to go to university, pursue higher apprenticeships, or enter competitive careers.
- **BTEC Vocational Qualifications:** These courses are designed for students who prefer a more practical and career-focused learning approach. BTECs offer a broad range of subjects across industries such as Business, IT, Performing Arts, and Sport.
- **Extended Project Qualification (EPQ):** The EPQ offers students the opportunity to engage in an independent research project, allowing them to develop essential skills in research, analysis, time management, and presentation. The EPQ is highly valued by universities and employers for its rigorous academic nature.
- **Enrichment Opportunities:** Birchwood offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities and leadership opportunities to enhance students' development outside of the classroom. These activities can include volunteering, sporting activities, and community service. These are designed to build character, foster a sense of community, and prepare students for the demands of life beyond school.

### **Curriculum Aims**

The curriculum is designed to provide a balanced educational experience, with an emphasis on:

- **Academic Excellence:** Ensuring students achieve their best academic outcomes through a combination of A Levels, BTECs.
- **Personal Development:** Students are supported to become well-rounded, tolerant, and engaged young adults. This includes character development, cultural awareness, and emotional well-being.
- **Leadership:** A key part of the curriculum is developing student leadership skills through both formal and informal leadership opportunities, including student leadership roles in extra-curricular activities
- **Preparation for Future Careers:** Whether students are heading to university, an apprenticeship, or employment, the curriculum provides the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities to make informed decisions and succeed in their future paths.

### **Entrance Requirements for Key Stage 5**

**All applicants for Key Stage 5 must meet the required entrance criteria to ensure that they are studying courses appropriate to their academic abilities.** Birchwood operates a Total Point Score (TPS) system, which is based on the best 8 GCSE or equivalent subject grades.

Total Point Score (TPS) Calculation:

- TPS is calculated by adding the GCSE/BTEC grades of the best 8 subjects.
- The score determines the most appropriate curriculum pathway for each student, ensuring that they are set up for success in their chosen courses.

### **TPS Benchmark:**

- A minimum TPS of 34 is required for admission into Key Stage 5.



- Students will need to meet the individual subject requirements in addition to the TPS threshold. Some subjects may have additional entry requirements, such as specific GCSE grades or prior experience in the subject area.
- For example, for A Level subjects, students may need to achieve a Grade 6 or higher in relevant GCSE subjects (e.g., Grade 6 in Maths for A Level Maths).
- All students should achieve a 4 or above in Maths and English

All applicants, both internal and external, will need to complete an online application form via ULAS.

GCSE Grade	BTEC Grade (Level 2) ICT, Business Construction
9	
8	DISTINCTION
7	
6	MERIT
5	
4	PASS
3	
2	
1	

  

Total Point Score - calculation		
Subject	Grade	Points
English Language	7	7
English Literature	6	6
Maths	5	5
History	4	4
Media	7	7
Science	4	4
Science	4	4
French	6	6
<b>Total =</b>		<b>43</b>

Subject	Open Choice 1	Open Choice 2	Open Choice 3	Open Choice 4	PSHCE	Enrichment
Hrs/Wk	5	5	5	5	0.5	0.5

Pathway 1: to study 4 A Level 3 courses students should have a TPS of above 48 and meet the entry requirements of the subject.

We will consider entry onto Pathway 1 dependent on subject requirements.



Students will be expected to supplement their 4 subjects with additional supporting qualifications and/or enrichment opportunities.

Pathway 2: to study 3 Level 3 courses students should have a TPS of above 40 and meet the entry requirements of the subject.

We will consider entry onto Pathway 2 dependent on subject requirements.

Students will be expected to supplement their 4 subjects with additional supporting qualifications and/or enrichment opportunities.

Pathway 3: to study 2 Level 3 courses and a Level 2, students should have a TPS of above 34 and meet the entry requirements of the subject.

We will consider entry onto Pathway 3 dependent on subject requirements.

Students will be expected to supplement their 4 subjects with additional supporting qualifications and/or enrichment opportunities.

Supporting Qualifications	Enrichment	Work Experience
Extended Project (EPQ) Duke of Edinburgh's Award	Clubs & Societies House Captains Leadership Committee School Council Sixth Form Ambassadors Sixth Form Prefects Sports Leaders Sixth form Trips and visits	Compulsory for all Year 12 students



## Courses and Entry Requirements

Subject	Level	Entry Requirement
Accounting	A Level	Grade 6 in GCSE Maths / 5 in English
Art & Design (Fine Art)	A level	Grade 5 in GCSE Art, Textiles or Graphics
Biology	A level	Grade 6 in Biology (if taken Triple) 2 x Grade 6 in Science (if taken Trilogy)
Business	A level	Grade 5 in GCSE Maths / 5 in English
Business	BTEC Certificate (Single)	TPS 34
Business	BTEC Diploma (Double)	TPS 34
Chemistry	A level	Grade 6 in Chemistry (if taken Triple) 2 x Grade 6 in Science (if taken Trilogy)
Computer Science	A level	Grade 6 in GCSE Maths / 6 in Computer Science
D&T: Product Design	A level	Grade 5 GCSE in any Design and Technology subject or Art / Science
D&T: Fashion and Textiles	A level	Grade 5 GCSE in any Design and Technology subject or Art
Drama and Theatre Studies	A level	Grade 5 in GCSE Drama If GCSE Drama was not taken a Grade 5 in English (Language or Literature)
Economics	A level	Grade 6 in GCSE Mathematics , Grade 5 in GCSE English Language
Environmental Science	A level	Grade 5 in any Triple Grade 5/5 in Trilogy
English Language	A level	Grade 6 in GCSE English Language
English Literature	A level	Grade 6 in GCSE English Literature
ESports	BTEC Certificate (Single)	TPS 34
Film Studies	A level	Grade 5 in GCSE Film or Media or Grade 5 in English Language or English Literature
French	A level	Grade 6 in GCSE French or the ability to study French to the equivalent level
Geography	A level	Grade 6 in Geography
German	A level	Grade 6 in GCSE German or the ability to study German to the equivalent level.
History	A level	Grade 6 in GCSE History
IT Computing	BTEC Certificate (Single)	TPS 34
Computer Science	A level	Grade 6 in GCSE Computer Science or , if not taken, Grade 6 in GCSE Maths
Mathematics	A level	Grade 6 in GCSE Mathematics (although a grade 7 is highly recommended)
Mathematics Further	A level	Grade 8 in GCSE Mathematics



Media Studies	A level	Grade 5 in GCSE Media or Film. If not taken at GCSE Grade 5 in English
Music	A level	Grade 5 in GCSE Music or Grade 5 in an instrument/voice if GCSE Music has not been taken
Performing Arts (Dance)	BTEC Certificate (Single)	TPS 34 Grade 5 in GCSE Dance or equivalent performance experience
Philosophy and Ethics RS	A level	Grade 5 in GCSE RS or, if not taken, Grade 5 in GCSE English Language
Physical Education	A level	Grade 6 GCSE in PE or Grade 6 in Science including Biology
Physics	A level	Grade 6 in Physics (if taken Triple) 2 x Grade 6 in Science (if taken Trilogy) Grade 6 GCSE Maths
Politics	A level	Grade 5 in GCSE History or English Literature
Psychology	A level	Grade 5 in GCSE English Language or Literature, GCSE Maths or Science
Sociology	A level	Grade 5 in GCSE English Language or Literature
Spanish	A level	Grade 6 in GCSE Spanish or the ability to study Spanish to the equivalent level.
Sport	BTEC Diploma (Double)	TPS 34
Sport	BTEC Extended Diploma (Triple)	TPS 34