

Birches Head Academy

Parent Handbook 2025-2026



All are welcome... [Abbey Hulton Primary School](#) [Ball Green Primary School](#)
[Burnwood Community School](#) [Carmountside Primary Academy](#) [Endon Hall Primary School](#) [Etruscan Primary School](#) [Forest Park Primary School](#) [Grove Academy](#) [Hanley St Luke's CE Aided Primary School](#) [Harpfield Primary Academy](#) [Hassell Community Primary School](#) [Heron Cross Primary School](#) [Holden Lane Primary School](#) [Kingsland C.E. Academy](#) [Milton Primary Academy](#) [New Ford Academy](#) [Newcastle-under-Lyme School](#) [Norton-le-Moors Primary Academy](#) [Our Lady And St Benedict Catholic Academy](#) [Saint Nathaniel's Academy](#) [Sneyd Academy](#) [St George And St Martin's Catholic Academy](#) [St John's CofE\(A\) Primary School](#) [St Johns CofE Primary School - Wetley Rocks](#) [St Josephs Preparatory School](#) [St Mark's CE Primary School](#) [St Peter's Catholic Academy](#) [Stoke Minster CofE Primary Academy](#) [The Willows Primary School](#) [Waterside Primary School](#) [Weston Junior Academy](#) [Oakhill Primary School](#)

My Child's Form Tutor is:

WAYS TO GET IN TOUCH:

Academy Address:

Birches Head Academy
Birches Head Road,
Stoke on Trent
ST2 8DD

Social Media:

Facebook: BirchesHeadAcademy
Twitter: @BirchesHeadAcad

Telephone: 01782 233595
Email: info@bircheshead.org.uk
Website: www.bircheshead.org.uk

Principal: Paul Masher

For emergencies, please call
Main Reception on 01782 233595.





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WELCOME FROM THE PRINCIPAL



It is my great pleasure to welcome you to Birches Head Academy (BHA), part of The Frank Field Education Trust, where our collective vision is that “Social Justice can be achieved through Excellence in Education”.

I am proud and privileged to be Principal of our caring, dynamic and inclusive Academy, which is located at the heart of our community in the creative city of Stoke-on-Trent, where we instil into our pupils a desire to “Be More” and in doing so enable them to make a real difference to our local community and beyond.

As a parent myself, I understand that we want our children to feel safe, happy and challenged to be successful in school. Our pupils deserve the very best and my benchmark as a leader is clear; if it wouldn't be good enough for my own two children, then it isn't good enough for our children here at BHA.

Our motto at BHA is simply “Aspire to Be More” and we have developed a knowledge rich curriculum that will enable our pupils to acquire a set of knowledge, skills and behaviours that will enable them to lead a choice-filled life, guided by a clear moral compass.

We are ambitious for every child and to uphold our vision we will deliver our knowledge rich curriculum with passion and purpose, promote social capital through our “Be More” curriculum and, as a bedrock for success, provide an inclusive education strengthened by dedicated Pastoral support where every child is known,

cared for and provided with strategies to overcome any barriers to success.

We have high standards and expectations of our pupils and for our pupils and our talented and committed staff will uphold these through my personal mantra of Rigour with a Smile; high standards and expectations underpinned with compassion.

Ultimately, we believe that by raising aspirations in our community, we can successfully develop in our pupils the understanding that learning is the route to a choice-filled life. We believe that improving educational outcomes is the only way we can positively impact on our pupils' future and we are passionate about learning, passionate about personal development and passionate about forging positive working relationships with our pupils, our parents / carers and our wider community.

I trust that the information provided within this handbook, and on our website, brings our passion to life and provides you with clarity on our high standards and expectations, our knowledge rich curriculum and our commitment to providing your child with the opportunities to ‘Aspire to Be More’. I look forward to the exciting journey that is ahead of us and welcoming you into the BHA community.

Mr P Masher
Principal

MISSION STATEMENT

It is our aim to deliver a curriculum that will enable pupils to have:

- Unlimited ideas and dreams.
- A vision of what they want to achieve in life and how to achieve it.
- A strong sense of duty, responsibility and service.
- Care and compassion towards each other, within the local community and the wider world.
- Choice-filled lives and the desire and motivation to develop as a good person.
- A positive contribution to local communities and wider society and a zest for living life to the full.

Above all else, we want our pupils to develop the values and skills they need to live choice filled lives. This is articulated in our motto:

ASPIRE TO BE MORE

We want to be the best school in the city and one of the best in the country, so that all our pupils have the best education and pupils to model positive behaviours based on mutual respect and social integrity. Our community has a consistent culture of high expectations so that everyone can achieve their full potential. By doing this we will instill into our pupils a desire and the means to be the best and make a positive difference in our world.

Our Academy Values:

As staff and pupils of Birches Head Academy:

- We will teach and learn the values of courage, justice, honesty, compassion, gratitude, humility, integrity and respect.
- We will teach and learn the skills of leadership, organisation, resilience, initiative and communication.

These values and skills will inspire us to grow in confidence and self-respect. They will foster a sense of pride and we will celebrate our successes.



The Frank Field Education Trust (FFET) is a multi-academy trust (MAT) based in the North West of England and West Midlands which aims to build on the work of outstanding teachers, leaders and schools within the Trust to serve schools and communities.

Our vision is that Social Justice can be achieved through Excellence in Education. The founder of the Trust, the Rt. Hon. Lord Frank Field, served for almost 40 years as the Member of Parliament for Birkenhead. During this time, Frank has campaigned extensively for social justice and in 2010 wrote "The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults" report, which has become a landmark document regarding the importance of Education and Early Years care in ending disadvantage.

We believe that all pupils in our schools will experience a high-quality education, ensuring all children gain the cultural capital necessary for a choice-filled life.

Find out more about the Trust: www.ffet.co.uk

YOUR CHILD'S TIMETABLE

All pupils in the Academy follow a timetable that runs over a two-week period. The timetables will be given to pupils on their first day of the Autumn Term. It will highlight the subject, subject teacher and classroom. Pupils should arrive on site no earlier than 8.15am and should leave the site at 3:10pm unless they are attending an organised activity.

Years 7, 10 & 11

08:30am - 9:40am	Start of the day / Lesson 1
09:40am - 10:40am	Lesson 2
10:40am - 11:00am	Break
11:00am - 12:00pm	Lesson 3
12:00pm - 12:30pm	Lunch
12:30pm - 1:00pm	Academic Review
1:00pm - 2:00pm	Lesson 4
2:00pm - 3:00pm	Lesson 5

Years 8 & 9

08:30am - 9:40am	Start of the day / Lesson 1
09:40am - 10:40am	Lesson 2
10:40am - 11:00am	Break
11:00am - 12:00pm	Lesson 3
12:00pm - 12:30pm	Academic Review
12:30pm - 1:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm - 2:00pm	Lesson 4
2:00pm - 3:00pm	Lesson 5

TERM DATES

	Start	Finish		Start	Finish
Autumn Term	Monday 1 September 2025	Friday 24 October 2025	Half Term Break	Monday 3 November 2025	Friday 19 December 2025
Christmas Break					
Spring Term	Monday 5 January 2026	Friday 13 February 2026	Half Term Break	Monday 23 February 2026	Friday 27 March 2026
Easter Break					
Summer Term	Monday 13 April 2026	Friday 22 May 2026	Half Term Break	Monday 1 June 2026	Friday 17 July 2026

Bank Holidays:

25 December 2025	Christmas Day
26 December 2025	Boxing Day
1 January 2026	New Year's Day
3 April 2026	Good Friday
6 April 2026	Easter Monday
4 May 2026	Early May bank holiday
25 May 2026	Spring bank holiday
31 August 2026	Summer bank holiday

INSET Days:

1 September 2025	INSET
2 September 2025	Trust Conference
24 October 2025	Disaggregated
5 January 2026	INSET
20 July 2026	Disaggregated

OUR CURRICULUM

Key Stage 3

The curriculum at Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9) has been carefully designed and sequenced. This is to ensure your child has a secure understanding of the core knowledge they will need to be successful by the end of Year 9. Pupils in key stage 3 experience a broad and balanced range of subjects that meet National Curriculum requirements.

Key Stage 4

Having experienced a wide range of subjects in Key Stage 3, pupils are carefully supported in making their option choices in Year 9. In Key Stage 4, pupils will be expected to study English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Science, Geography and/or History, and pupils will have the option to study a Modern Foreign Language. Our pupils will make their option choices from a suite of other subjects on offer, such as PE, Drama and Music.

Reports

You will receive a report three times throughout the academic year which will give you information about your child's progress in the subjects they are studying.

Literacy

We place an extremely high value on ensuring our pupils possess strong literacy skills needed for success. Reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are crucial in ensuring outstanding learning within all curriculum areas but also in securing success in our pupils' lives beyond the Academy.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in literacy are carefully planned across the curriculum. Each classroom displays literacy support materials, such as key words, spelling rules and examples of punctuation. With literacy, our aim is to create an explicit focus in order to develop each pupil's ability to communicate clearly and accurately.

Attainment

Your child's progress is carefully assessed and monitored throughout their time at the Academy. We measure progress against our subject curriculum to ensure all pupils are gaining the knowledge and skills to be successful. If a pupil is identified as not achieving to their full potential, a range of interventions and support will be planned in order to get back on track.

Monitoring and supporting pupils' literacy skills

All pupils complete a diagnostic reading test that helps the Academy to identify the needs of all so that we can support each pupil as appropriate. Pupils will be tested again later in the academic year so that we can ensure that all pupils are making the expected progress.

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISERS

At Birches Head Academy, we are always striving to enhance the learning experience of our pupils and equip them with the tools they need to succeed.

With this in mind, we have introduced Knowledge Organisers as a valuable resource to support your child's education.

Knowledge Organisers are designed to improve the retention of information by helping pupils build a solid foundation of factual knowledge in their long-term memory. We understand that the capacity of our working memory is limited, and by reinforcing essential information beyond the classroom, we aim to facilitate better understanding and academic progress.

Research shows that structured and monitored homework can be particularly effective for all pupils. Therefore, each pupil will be provided with a Knowledge Organiser to guide them in their homework assignments. These organisers are carefully crafted to reinforce key concepts, subject-specific terminology, and essential information across various subjects.

The organisers contain clear sections outlining the subjects to focus on each night, making it easier for you to support your child in completing their homework tasks efficiently. Additionally, all subjects have contributed to the creation of these organisers, ensuring that they cover crucial vocabulary and core knowledge necessary for academic success.

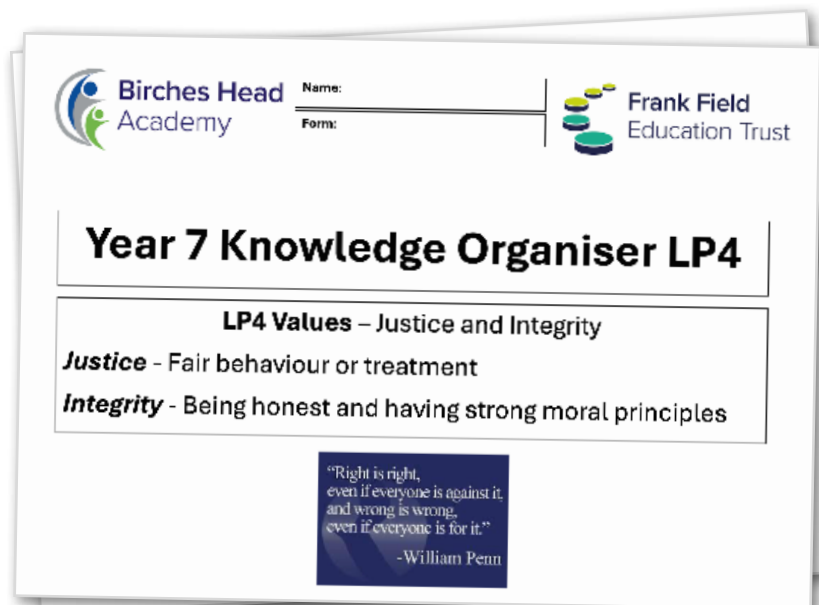
Every day your child should be studying at least 1 section of the knowledge organiser for homework. The timetable within the knowledge organiser tells you which subjects your child should

be studying on which days (it does not matter if your child does not have the subject on that day or not, they should still follow the timetable).

Homework

Your child needs to bring their knowledge organiser and homework book with them every day to the academy. Parents should tick off their child's homework every evening when it is completed. Homework will be checked every Friday by form tutors and positive points awarded for completion.

The knowledge organisers will also act as your child's planner, including their timetable, subject specific resources, times of the day, term dates, uniform expectations, consistency across the academy, the learning programme cycle, rewards and behaviour systems.



WHAT ARE LEARNING PROGRAMMES

Teachers plan the pupils' learning over two key stages. Key Stage 3 is your child's learning journey from Year 7 to 9 followed by Key Stage 4 where your child will begin their GCSE and BTEC formal qualifications.

Our vision is 'lived' in the way teachers develop their curriculum and the way pupils experience it.

All pupils follow a Learning Programme (LP) in each subject. They detail the programme of study for each subject, setting out the core knowledge each child is expected to learn. All pupils follow the same Learning Programme. This means that all pupils are taught the same broad and balanced curriculum. The Learning Programme sequences the learning in a set period of time (7 or 8 weeks).

It is really important that parents take an active interest in the learning that their child is experiencing. By following the Learning Programmes, parents can supplement the work being done in the Academy through further enrichment activities or independent study. Each Learning Programme builds on prior learning and outlines links with previous and future topics. The teacher explains how the learning links with previous learning and supports the learning to come. Retrieval practice is built into the teaching and learning process. It is expected that Learning Programmes are revised and updated each cycle in light of evaluation of their effectiveness and to reflect any changes in terms of content and gaps in knowledge.

WWW.BIRCHESHEAD.ORG.UK/LEARNING-PROGRAMMES

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BEING PREPARED FOR EACH DAY

Equipment

It is important that pupils arrive on time and well equipped for every lesson they attend. This prevents disruption to their learning as well as the learning of others. Please find below a list of basic equipment every pupil must have for every lesson.

- Knowledge Organiser
- Pencil Case containing:
 - Reading Book
 - Minimum of 2 black and blue pens
 - Minimum of 2 pencils
 - Ruler
 - Rubber

The use of mobile phones is not permitted on the school grounds and they should be turned off and placed into the pupil's bag once on the school site. If a mobile phone is seen or heard it will be confiscated, parents will be contacted and asked to collect the mobile phone from main reception.



TECHNOLOGY AT THE ACADEMY

To use the Academy's computer network all pupils and parents/carers must agree and sign our ICT Acceptable Use Agreement.

Username and Password

On joining the Academy, pupils are issued with a username and password for access to the network. Pupils can change their password at any time.

Social Networking Guidance

The widespread availability and use of mobile technology and social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in a variety of ways. Whilst we embrace these technologies our Academy mobile phone and e-safety policies do not permit pupils to access these sites during the school day. We do not allow the use of a mobile phone during the day. They should be switched off on entry to the school site in the morning.

Social networking sites have a 'no under 13 registration policy' and recommend Parental guidance for 13 to 16 year olds. Use of mobile technologies and social media sites does, on occasion, lead to incidents of 'cyber bullying'. Whilst we have zero tolerance to bullying, by adopting the recommended no use of mobile phones/social networking sites on the Academy premises, bullying issues linked to use of this media outside of the school day will not be dealt with unless it is directly impacting on pupils' relationships in school.

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to monitor their child's mobile phone/social networking site usage.



Email

The Academy is keen to ensure that we communicate with parents as quickly and effectively as possible. We hope that you are able to provide an up to date email address for us, which will facilitate this form of communication. It will allow us to send important reminders and email alerts, as well as instant news. Regular updates are also posted to our website and social media pages.

STAYING SAFE ONLINE

You can make a huge difference if you talk to your child about their internet use; let them know you are there to guide them and to pass on essential safety advice.

For the great majority of children, their use of the internet will be perfectly safe and enjoyable. But nothing in life is 100% safe, all of the time, and the internet is no different. Just like in the real world, we need to take sensible precautions on the internet to protect our families from harm.

1. Talk to your child about their internet use and take an interest. Your involvement is the best way of keeping them safe.
2. Pass on the safety advice in this handbook – talk over the advice given.
3. Be positive! The internet is a fantastic resource for learning, entertainment and communication. Just like in the real world, you need to take a few sensible precautions.
4. Let your child know they can come to you if something they don't like happens online. Try not to overreact. This could simply make your child secretive about their internet use and close down lines of communication between you.
5. Remember that all the safety advice here also applies to going online with a mobile phone.
6. If you decide to use software to filter or monitor information from the internet, talk this over with your child. Any ground rules you agree will be much more effective.

Action checklist for all our pupils staying safe online

- ✓ Remember, everyone you meet online is a stranger, even though they might seem like a friend
- ✓ Always use a nickname when you log on and never give out any personal details that would allow someone you meet online to contact you. This means full name, home or school address, telephone number, personal email or mobile number
- ✓ Never arrange to meet up alone with someone you make friends with online. If you believe they are a potential friend, speak with an adult. Always take an adult you trust and meet in a public place
- ✓ Try to have your online conversations in public; people are less likely to hassle you if other people can see them doing it
- ✓ Accepting emails or opening files from people you don't really know can get you into trouble – they may contain viruses, nasty messages or annoying links you don't want to see
- ✓ Talk to an adult you know well and ask for help if you are worried or upset about anything you have seen or been sent online
- ✓ When posting photographs online, ensure you do not show the school badge or take pictures outside the school premises - this makes it easier to identify the area you live in. Linking your photos with information from your social media profile, the updates you post or your 'check-ins' can reveal a lot about you that you may not want out there.

ACADEMY LIBRARY

The Library is the heart of the BHA community, where students can read, study, take part in extra-curricular activities, and be encouraged to be more. The Library boasts a huge variety of topics spanning a large number of genres and topics.

Key aims and objectives of the Library:

- To develop a culture of reading for pleasure
- To provide an exciting place for reading at BHA
- To provide a range of reading-related extra-curricular opportunities
- To support achievement and develop students' reading confidence

Opening Times

As well as timetables library lessons for KS3, students may use the Library during their break and lunch times in the Academy.

After school the Library is open until 4pm. There are a wide variety of extra-curricular activities that students can get involved with.

Extra Curricular Activities

The current extracurricular activities offered to students in the Library are as follows:

- Monday 3.10pm – 4pm: Video Game Club
- Thursday 3.10pm – 4pm: Chess Club
- Friday lunchtime: Literacy Champions Meetings

School Reading Cloud

The Reading Cloud is a website that holds information about all the books in our school library.

Reading Cloud allows students to:

- Search all hard copy books in the library for help with homework, independent research and reading for pleasure
- See the latest library news such as 'Book of the Week'
- See what books are trending across the school, and the country

- See the latest library book returns
- Get recommendations for new books to try

Once logged in students can also:

- Reserve books
- Keep a track of their hard copy book loans, and when they are due
- Post book reviews of library books they have read.
- Send the librarians a message or ask a question about library stock

How to Log in to your account:

- To access Reading Cloud use the link here
- Enter your password (school email address)
- Enter your username (date of birth) 01012010 would be 1st Jan 2010.
- Select 'Birches Head Academy'
- Any difficulties, please contact the librarians

Library Ambassadors

Each year, students are invited to apply for the position of Library Ambassador. Library Ambassadors offer help and support to Mrs. Sanders and Mr Bowcock in the Library. Duties include: stacking shelves, creating displays, organising stock, and general upkeep.

For more information, please see Mrs. Sanders or Mr Bowcock.





UNIFORM & APPEARANCE

Birches Head Academy uniform has been selected to ensure all pupils feel part of the Academy's community. Items of clothing have been chosen carefully to ensure they are not unduly expensive but smart. Personal presentation is important in the world of work and want to ensure that all our pupils develop a sense of pride in their appearance.

Essential Uniform Items

Blazer	BHA Blazer with embroidered badge
Jumper	Black Academy Jumper or Black Plain V Neck Jumper (must not be branded such as Nike/Addidas etc)
Tie	Birches Head Academy Tie
Shirt	Plain white with formal collar
Trousers	Trousers mid grey formal from any school wear provider (must not be skinny trousers/leggings or black)
Skirt	Birches Head Academy grey/black tartan skirt
Tights	Black 80-100 denier
Coat	Plain and waterproof, no jackets, hoodies, denim
Bag	Birches Head Academy Bag (rucksack)
Shoes	Black, polishable leather type formal shoes (not canvas, branded or sportswear)
Religious Clothing	Hijabs must be secure and must be either mid gray or black. Jilbabs must be mid grey. Blazer and Jumper must be worn in addition to any religious attire

All items of Academy uniform can be purchased from either:

The National Schoolwear Centres Hanley

97 – 101 Stafford Street Hanley ST1 1LS

Telephone: 01782 272991

Motif Marketing

11 Millrise Road, Milton, Stoke on Trent ST2 7BN

Telephone: 01782 534849

School trousers/skirts must be formal school wear, see overleaf for full guidance.

UNIFORM & APPEARANCE



Tailored mid grey trousers for both boys and girls. These should look like suit trousers and should be made from cotton like material.



Trousers must be smart and business like. Stretchy, tight fitting trousers are not acceptable.



Tailored mid grey skirt, knee length worn with black opaque tights. Skirts must be the correct length which is on the knee or slightly below, allowing 2 centimetres growth.



Black Academy Jumper or Black Plain V Neck Jumper (must not be branded such as Nike/Addidas etc)



Academy branded Bag



Jewellery

Only a watch is permitted. We advise all pupils not to have piercings until the start of the 6 weeks holidays to ensure all studs can be safely removed prior to the start of school. Any item of jewellery seen will be confiscated, including facial piercings of any kind (e.g. lip/nose/eyelid). Clear retainers are not allowed. Wearing jewellery, piercings, or temporary tattoos is not permitted at BHA, with the exception of Mehndi for special occasions such as Eid.

Equipment

All pupils must have a pencil case including: pencils, pens, ruler, rubber and a reading book with them daily.

Mobile Phones are forbidden within the school grounds. Mobile phones will be confiscated if pupils have a mobile phone out in class, during social times or in any areas of the school premises. Mobile phones should be turned off and placed into the pupil's bag once on the school site. Once confiscated, mobile phones will be taken to main reception and await collection from a parent or carer.

Hair and cosmetics

Hair must be natural in colour (long hair should be able to be tied back). No extreme hair styles (bright and unnatural colours). Hair bands and alic bands must be in academy colours (blue, grey or black). Clawclips, bandanas, durags, hair wraps and other hair accessories are not allowed. Shaved patterns, 'holiday' braids are not permitted.

Cosmetics

False nails, false eyelashes or other such beauty accessories are not acceptable. Pupils are not allowed to wear make-up (including nail varnish) to school. If they do, they will be asked to remove it on entry to the academy.

In the interest of health and safety, pupils will not be permitted to wear pump style footwear. Converse, Vans, Nike AirMax and high tops etc are not acceptable and **MUST** not be worn

School trousers/skirts must be formal school wear.

The academy does not accept any responsibility for the loss of or damage to personal possessions brought on site.

UNIFORM & APPEARANCE: PE KIT

Essential PE Kit

T-Shirt	Birches Head Academy Polo shirt with emblem
Jogging Bottoms	Navy blue jogging bottom with no branding / logos
Leggings	Navy blue leggings with no branding / logos
Hoodie (optional)	Birches Head Academy Navy blue hoodie with emblem - only to be worn during PE lessons
Socks (optional)	Academy socks are optional. Must be worn when representing the school
Footwear	Trainers - no canvas pump style



**Trainers will need to be worn for all PE lessons.
No shoes are allowed.**

When representing the Academy in any sports occasion, full Academy kit must be worn including the Academy socks.

Non participants

Note from parent/guardian

Long term non participation – medical note

Remember

- Long hair tied back

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

Pastoral Care

The Principal is assisted in the planning and delivery of pastoral care at the Academy by a team which includes Senior Leaders, Heads of Learning, Subject Leaders, Learning Coaches and Form Tutors.

Form tutors are the first point of contact at the Academy and will deal with the majority of questions or concerns that may arise. For more serious issues, the Head of Learning or Learning Coach is there to support you and your child both in terms of their academic progress and for any major pastoral issues that may arise. Please get in touch with your child's Form Tutor, Head of Learning or Learning Coach either by School Synergy App, phone, email or letter. The pastoral staff should be kept informed about illness, absence, dental or medical appointments or any change in home circumstances.

Academic Review

Your child will spend 25 minutes each day with their form during a period of time called 'Academic Review'. During this time, pupils will meet with their Form Tutor. A daily uniform and appearance check is carried out to ensure the highest of standards are maintained. Your child will have at least one assembly each week. As part of our drive to encourage all children to enjoy the pleasure of reading, we actively promote this by asking all pupils to read. We ensure that pupils in Years 7-9 have reading books appropriate to their reading age. Your child's Form Tutor will focus on the tracking and monitoring of pupils' academic progress through individual meetings, supporting the work of the Head of Learning.

Home Contact Details

It is essential that we are able to contact Parents/Carers at the earliest opportunity. Please ensure that all contact details are

correct including emergency phone numbers and email addresses. Pupils are, in effect, a health and safety risk if we are unable to contact parents/ carers should an emergency arise. Please supply at least two contact details we can use to support this.

Medical Guidance

The Academy has full-time First-Aiders available for pupils. Should your child require first-aid treatment or medical assistance you will be informed at the earliest opportunity if first aid is necessary.

Due to changes in medical guidance from September 2014, written consent now has to be obtained from Parents/ Carers before any medicine (including paracetamol) can be administered.

Supporting Pupils with Additional Needs

At the Academy we recognise that provision for pupils with additional needs and disabilities is a whole school responsibility. Our SEND policy and provision is guided by the SEND Code of Practice, 2014.

Our SEND policy aims:

- to ensure barriers to learning are identified and addressed
- to offer a graduated and thoughtful response to identifying, assessing and meeting needs
- to facilitate access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for all pupils
- to enable pupils with additional needs to achieve academically, commensurate with ability and to be set aspirational targets
- to take into account the views of pupils with additional needs
- to encourage meaningful and regular communication with parents and carers of pupils with additional needs
- to offer appropriate support and modification, according to advice and need

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Birches Head Academy fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. Registers are completed electronically every lesson throughout the day.

Absence

All absences should, of course, be kept to an absolute minimum. If your child is ill and unable to attend the Academy, please contact us by telephone as soon as possible. It is expected that when pupils return, they provide a note from parents. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal and Governors at our school are committed to working closely with parents, other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Regular attendance and good punctuality at school is expected. The reasons for this are obvious: pupils learn best and receive most from Academy when they are actually there. This issue is highlighted in the Home/School Agreement which all parents are asked to sign at the beginning of each year and also within other regular communications between home and school.

Support

Any pupil whose absence falls below 97% will be noted by the Head of Learning and the pupil will be placed on the 'Attendance Strategy' which is a graduated intervention system. This is to encourage improved attendance and where needed to put support systems in place with additional agencies, to address persistent absence issues.

Holidays during term time

The Principal may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. The Principal will also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. From this perspective leave of absence in term time is no longer a parental right and will only be authorised at the Principal's discretion. Under DFE guidelines the school will notify the Local Authority if a parent/s takes leave of absence without the Principal's permission. In these cases, the U code will be used on the register to show this absence is unauthorised.

Lateness

Pupils who arrive late will receive a "Pastoral Late" which triggers -2 and a same day 20 minute detention. If a pupil is late 4 or more times in a week this will trigger a day in the ISC.

Medical Visits

Children who have to leave for any reason throughout the day should sign out at Main office, for collection by their parent/carer or appropriate adult. This is strongly discouraged. Parents are requested to make dental or medical appointments outside of school hours. Occasionally, pupils will need to leave the Academy during the day for an urgent visit to the doctor, hospital or dentist. Parents/Carers must add a message onto Synergy to inform the Academy of any medical appointments.

If you need to collect your child before the end of the school day this must be completed before 2.30pm. After this time, we are unable to collect pupils from their lessons and they will leave at their normal time of 3.10pm.

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY



The chart below shows the number of days and lessons of 'lost learning' for pupils who fall below certain percentage attendances. The chart is based on a school with a 190 day year and shows a five period day.

Attendance	95%	90%	85%	80%
Number of days lost learning	9.5	19	28.5	38
Number of lessons lost learning (5 days)	47.5	95	142.5	190

You can help by:

- making sure that your child's attendance and punctuality are as good as possible
- not condoning your child's absence for minor things
- making sure appointments for the dentist etc are made outside of school hours

Is 95% attendance good? This means that your child has still missed nearly 10 school days in one year. Over five years that would be nearly 50 days, this is almost a school term. Research suggests that '17 missed school days a year equals a drop in a grade in GCSE achievement' (Department for Education).

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

At Birches Head Academy we know how important it is to build partnerships with parents. This builds strength in our community and supports pupils in their development and learning. We rely on the commitment and support of all parents to make this partnership work. We often run events to support this partnership and are always open to new ideas and feedback so please contact us whenever you feel the need to. This is a summary of the Home-Academy agreement that Form Tutors, Parents and Pupils are asked to sign.

It is the responsibility of the Academy

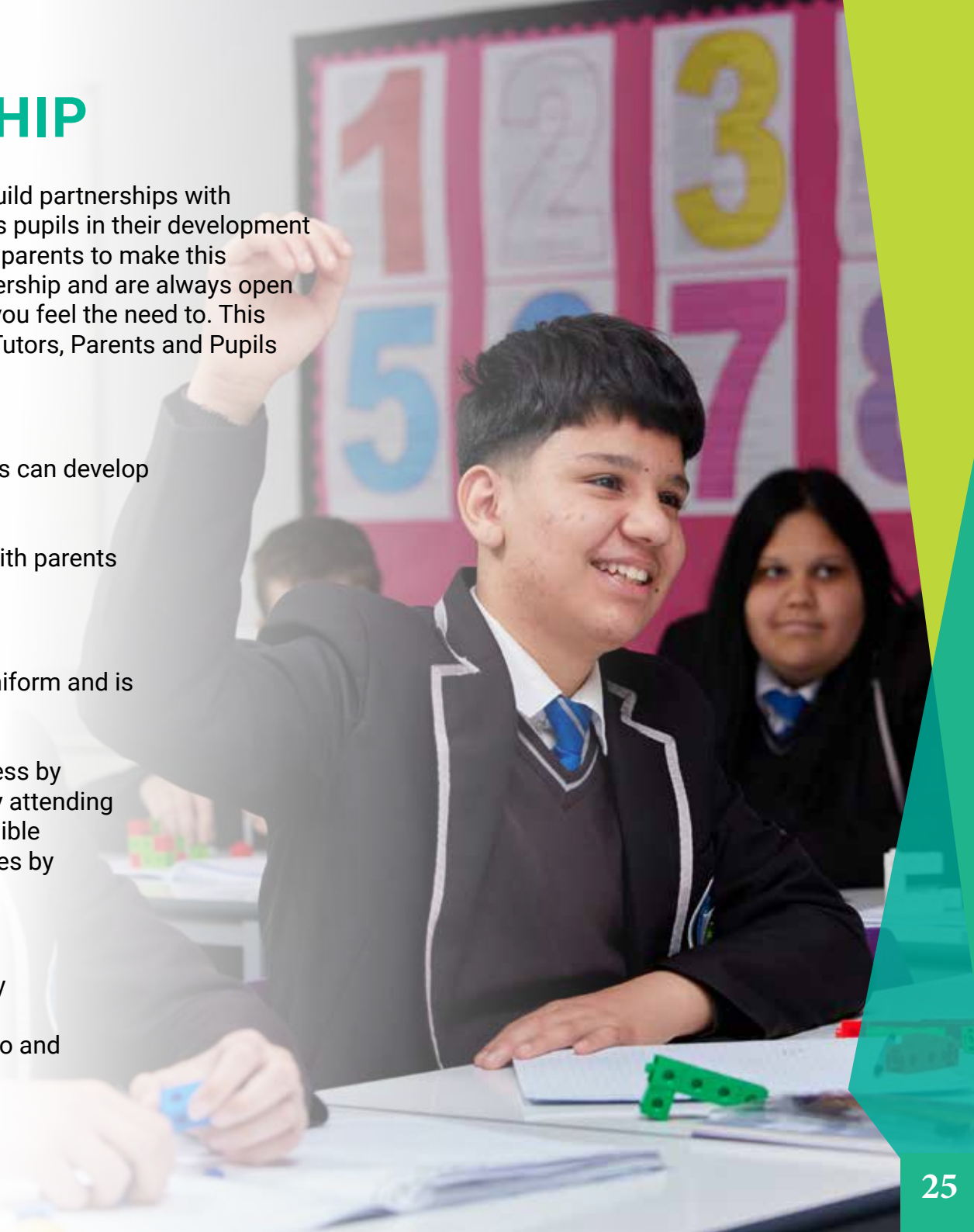
- To provide a safe and secure environment in which pupils can develop academic, sporting and cultural talents
- To develop in the Academy a true sense of community
- To establish effective partnership and communication with parents
- To provide high quality teaching, learning and support

It is the responsibility of parents

- To ensure your child attends Academy regularly in full uniform and is properly equipped and on time for the school day
- To support the authority and discipline of the Academy
- To take an active interest in your child's academic progress by supporting the Academy's homework programme and by attending Parent Evenings and other relevant activities where possible
- To ensure that you are fully aware of the Academy policies by reading all listed on the website

It is my responsibility as a pupil

- To attend in full uniform and arrive promptly and properly equipped for each day
- To be an ambassador for the Academy whilst travelling to and from home
- To accept the authority of the Academy at all times
- To do my best at all times



SCHOOL SYNERGY: PARENTAL COMMUNICATIONS

School Synergy enables parents and carers to have an immediate overview of many aspects of school life, including behaviour, homework, attendance and communication.

Frank Field Education Trust (FFET) uses an information platform called School Synergy to help make communication between home and school easy and efficient for both parents and students.

This system is a one-stop access for your entire home to school communication needs and is widely used by schools across the country. School Synergy is the single access point for parents and carers which provides up to date school news and information, a place to communicate and engage with school and the ability to track the progress and development of your child as it happens.

Communicating with Parents

School Synergy enables parents and carers to have an immediate overview of many aspects of school life including behaviour, homework, attendance and communication.

Once registered, parents and carers can view information tailored for their child(ren). They are able to view parent letters, school calendar/events, pupil timetables and behaviour. The behaviour module provides a real time view displaying positive points awarded as well informing you where aspects of behaviour may be limiting progress and outstanding detentions.

Register a Parent Portal Account

To register an account, or add another child to your account, you will need a Pupil Code. The Pupil Code is unique to you and your child.

Each parent/carer or family member who wish to have access must use their own Pupil Code (if the 'term' is Student Code... you could change it to just say "Code").

- Click on the school synergy link at the top of the school website or alternatively
- Click on the Parent Registration button
- Complete the fields using the unique Student Code (this is stated on your registration letter)
- You will be sent a verification email. Check your email (and spam folder) and click the link to verify.

Please contact school if you wish for another family member to have access to School Synergy.

If you have multiple children at school you can add those accounts later from the Students menu.

Adding Another Child to your Account

If you have more than one child at school, they can be easily added to the Parent Portal. Once you are logged into the Parent Portal, select Students from the menu.

Use the code from your child's registration letter and their date of birth to add children to your account. Please note that Student Codes are unique and can only be registered to the parent or carer specified. They cannot be shared or given to another person. Contact your school if you have not been issued with a code for your child.

If you require further assistance, please contact the school office.



SUPPORTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Praise and Rewards

It is very important to recognise hard work, effort, success and achievement and celebrate this through our Academy community. Our rewards system is linked to our positive and negative behaviour points system. This ensures all pupils have the opportunity to have their efforts and achievements recognised and rewarded. There is an expectation that positive points will be awarded by all staff for various reasons, including (but not limited to) recognition of good effort within the classroom, 100% attendance, positive contribution in form time, excellent homework etc. Point Totals will be highlighted weekly in assemblies and prizes and rewards available include 'fast pass lunch pass', termly reward trips, school vouchers etc.

Our aim is to create a culture that promotes excellent behaviour which ensures that pupils can learn in a calm, safe and supportive environment and protects them from disruption.

We are passionate about our communities and the world around us and commit to make a positive contribution. Everything we do is based on the values we share. We believe that all pupils should be aware of the standards of behaviour expected at our Academy which are underpinned by our values. Positive relationships through out the Academy are built on a set of shared values:

- Justice - our academy rules are fair and reasonable.
- Humility - we aim to ensure that everyone in our community has a place and a voice that will be heard.
- Respect - treat others how you would wish to be treated yourself.
- Courage - the quality of having strength in the face of difficulty.
- Integrity - the quality of having strong values
- Compassion - the quality of having concern for others.

- Honesty - the quality of being truthful.
- Gratitude - the quality of being thankful and showing appreciation.

We want our pupil to do this not only because they must, but because they want to, and are mature enough to know how to do the right thing.

Pupils learn how to respond well to challenges they face in everyday life and the values are those character traits that enable them to respond appropriately to situation.

The diagram below shows the reasons why we believe pupils behave well:



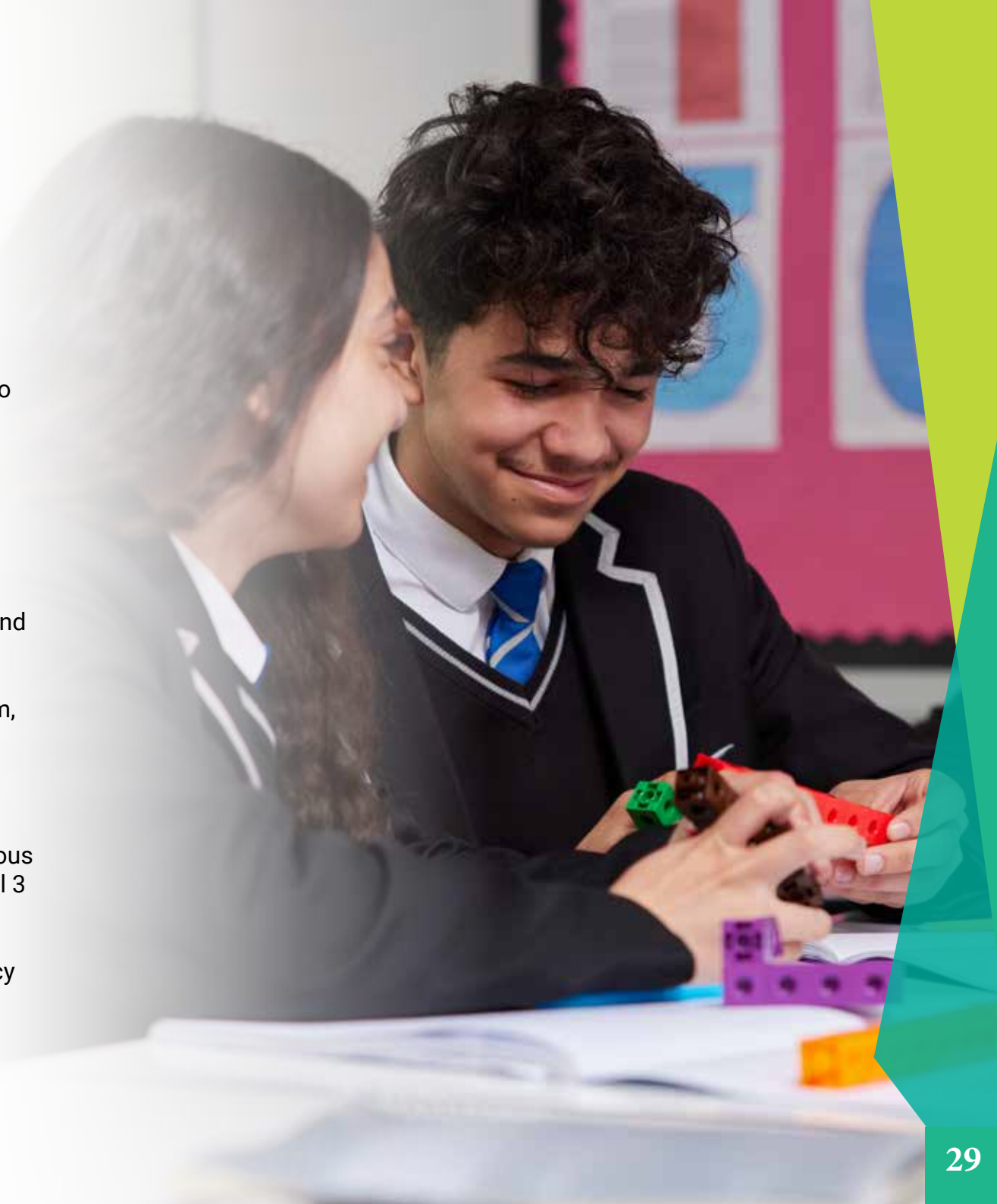
Behaviour and Discipline

To ensure the Academy is a safe community where all can learn, we have a minimum number of rules. Our Behaviour for Learning policy ensures the smooth running of the Academy and fosters good working relationships between staff and pupils. Our systems are used to allow positive and negative comments to be logged, it is also important to recognise all incidents of positive and negative behaviour. Information is shared with parents and is accessed in real time through a web browser or School Synergy app.

All behaviours in and out of the classroom will be logged using levels that link to our Behaviour policy. Pupils will be taught that behaviour is a choice which can bring positive and negative consequences; good behaviour is expected and rewarded, negative behaviour is sanctioned.

Any pupils breaking the rules regarding punctuality, uniform, behaviour or use of the facilities should be dealt with either by a class/Form Tutor in the first instance (Level 1 behaviour). For more serious matters (Level 2 behaviour) pupils will be referred to the Subject Leader or Head of Learning. There may be occasions where behaviour is serious enough to necessitate the referral to a Senior Leader (Level 3 behaviour).

Please refer to the Academies Behaviour for Learning policy for full detail of the policy and practice.



THE DINING EXPERIENCE

The Catering Staff work very hard to maintain the quality and variety of meals with every effort being made to respond to pupils' requests.

Packed Lunches

If you wish your child to bring a packed lunch then this should be eaten in the dining hall, the Pavillion or in the designated area.

We do not allow fizzy drinks, high energy drinks and high caffeine drinks onto the premises. Water is always the healthy option. Please try to give your child a healthy variety each day and encourage them to eat fruit rather than sweets.

ParentPay

ParentPay allows you to make payments online for items such as dinner money and school trips. Using a secure website called ParentPay you will be able to pay online using your credit / debit card or make cash payments at PayPoint stores. ParentPay will be our preferred method of making payments to school.

- Visit www.parentpay.com
- Enter your activation username and password in the Account Login section of the homepage (please contact the Academy if you have not received your activation username and password).
- Once activation is complete you can go straight to Items for payment, select which item(s) you want to add to your basket and proceed to complete your payment

Cashless Dining System

The dining hall operates a cashless system whereby meals are paid for with credits using a biometric fingerprint system. Money can be credited to accounts using ParentPay.



SAFEGUARDING TEAM:



Tina Adlington
Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Louise Toach
Deputy
Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Leon Ashman
Deputy
Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Hannah Savage
Deputy
Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Sophie Bwayla
Deputy
Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Daniel Jones
Deputy
Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Emily Marren
Deputy
Designated
Safeguarding Lead

REPORTING A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN



What is Safeguarding?

The following information can also be found, along with greater detail, in the schools Safeguarding policy.

In order to ensure pupils are safe whilst at school, we have a clear safeguarding policy in place. Safeguarding can encompass other areas of a pupil's life (in/outside school) and we will always seek to support the pupil and families in these areas where we can and where it is appropriate to do so. At Birches Head Academy we believe that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and we believe that we have a duty of care in this area which goes above and beyond the statutory requirement. We recognise that we may be the 'significant adult' in the pupils' lives at school, and therefore their safety is paramount.

Every child and young person has a right to be safe. Safeguarding means keeping our pupils safe from any type of harm or neglect. All adults have a responsibility to protect children and it is the role of parents, carers and adults such as teachers, learning mentors, doctors, nurses, social workers, police officers, faith leaders and sports coaches to ensure that our pupils are safe.

How do I Report a Safeguarding Concern?

If you are worried about something that is happening to your child or someone you know, you don't have to deal with it on your own – Talk to the Designated Safeguarding Officers or the Deputy Safeguarding Officers. You can do this using the Safeguarding "Tell Us" menu (www.bircheshead.org.uk/tell-us/) on our website to submit a confidential concern, via email bha-safeguarding@bircheshead.org.uk, or by calling the school office on 01782 233595 and your details will be passed on to one of the safeguarding team to return your call.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

We strive to provide pupils with a wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities which take place at the end of each day. A timetable is shared with pupils and parents at the beginning of each learning cycle.

It is an expectation that all pupils in Years 7-10 join at least one club per learning programme and they are awarded positive achievement points and LORIC points for their attendance at their chosen clubs. Year 11 pupils are committed to their daily additional study period.

The extra-curricular life at the Academy is rich and varied. BHA offers pupils a wide range of activities extra to the normal timetable, either at lunch time or after school, providing pupils the opportunity to meet, teach and learn from each other in a relaxed atmosphere. Your child can pursue interests in:

- Fitness
- Sports
- Design Technology
- STEM Club
- Drama
- Dance
- Music
- Film Club
- Duke of Edinburgh

www.bircheshead.org.uk/extra-curricular

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This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Birches Head Academy

Birches Head Road, Stoke on Trent, ST2 8DD

Telephone: 01782 233595

Website: www.bircheshead.org.uk



Part of the

Frank Field

Education Trust