

Birchwood School Handbook

*Rules, Regulations
and Policies*

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Mission Statement

Our Mission is to provide an educational setting where all students are given challenging and rigorous academic work according to ability, where an achievement culture espouses and builds strong work habits and healthy attitudes, and where a caring environment forges social responsibility.

Our tools in this building process are fourfold: 1) a school-wide ethos which continually inspires, challenges and expects the highest personal achievement according to personal abilities, 2) a curriculum which uses time-tested and research based methodology, and which maintains academic standards measured against benchmark programs across the state, 3) a close parent-teacher relationship for careful oversight of each child, and 4) a faculty which exemplifies the virtues we hope to inculcate.

Stakeholders

We identify our stakeholders as those people who have a vested interest in the success of Birchwood School. It is these people with whom we consult in the design and implementation of the curricula and related academic programs.

These stakeholders include, but are not limited to: 1) the Birchwood School administration, 2) Birchwood School teaching staff, 3) Birchwood School Trustees, 4) parents of current Birchwood School Students, 5) parents of former Birchwood School students, and 6) individuals from the community who have taken an active interest in our establishment, growth and development.

General Behavior Policy

It is our goal to create a culture of achievement at Birchwood School. An important part of this culture is a school environment that celebrates, honors, and supports academic achievement. Guidelines for school behavior support this environment.

Adherence to our school regulations and rules pertains to both the letter of the rules and the spirit. We believe that positive attitude is just as important as good behavior. Individual and/or group attitudes can significantly enhance or inhibit the learning environment. Therefore, we reserve the right to discipline any inappropriate attitudes as determined by our teachers and the administration.

Parent Teacher Cooperation

Research and our experience show that pupil success and parental involvement go hand-in-hand. Therefore we strive to maintain a close working relationship with parents to insure each child's success.

The School's Responsibility

It is the school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. This requires four factors. First, we attempt to keep each student at an instructional level in all subject areas. Second, we help our staff remain abreast of the best time-tested and research based teaching methods and strategies in each subject. Third, we work to maintain educational standards that are as high, if not higher, than the best educational programs in Northeast Ohio. Finally, we invite parents to maintain an on-going dialogue with teachers concerning their child's progress and development.

The Parents' Responsibility

Parents are the primary determinant of a child's attitude and success in school. Before children reach their teen years, it is the parents who determine the development of habits and attitudes toward school, school work and relationships at school. In our practice, we hope that parents will assume the major responsibility for the behavior, attitude and work habits of their children.

Parent Service/Volunteer Work

With a view to maintain and strengthen the school's sense of family and mutuality, Birchwood School requests that parents participate in school service projects.

We recommend five to ten hours of school service work during the school year. Service and service projects for the upcoming school year are listed by the Birchwood School Parents Committee during the previous spring. Sign-up for volunteer work begins in May of the preceding school year.

School Discipline

A positive attitude toward school, work and personal growth is the best antidote to misbehavior. But children are children and we expect periodic misbehavior that we address through instruction and discipline. In general there are three levels of discipline.

1. Typical classroom misbehavior that requires disciplinary measures commensurate with the offense and followed by instruction that guides the child toward appropriate behavior. For example, if a child is repeatedly talking out of turn during a class discussion, he may be told he cannot participate in the discussion for the remainder of the period. Afterwards the teacher will explain the effects of this misbehavior: how it affects the teacher, the others in the class, and the misbehaving child.
2. Persistent misbehavior that is adversely affecting the learning environment. At this point parents will be contacted and a meeting will be set up to discuss intervention strategies that can address the behavior problem.
3. Misbehavior that has not responded to step #2. At this point the school and the parents will need to consider whether or not Birchwood is the best fit for the child. There may be underlying problems beyond the school's expertise.
4. Birchwood School reserves the right to forego all of the above steps and suspend a student immediately if we believe student behavior warrants a severe response. Birchwood School administration shall determine when such circumstances exist.

Homework Policy

Research confirms the vital role that homework plays in a child's education. We believe a good homework policy will:

1. Develop good study habits, including organization and time management.
2. Increase time-on-task, which results in greater understanding of content and automaticity in skill work.
3. Provide time for acceleration.
4. Provide time for remediation.

Parents can play an important role in helping children build study habits through homework assignments:

1. Review your child's homework notebook nightly. Check off assignments as they are finished.
2. Provide your child with a definite place to study where he/she can keep supplies for work.
3. Help your child manage time by making daily and weekly schedules.
4. Keep in mind the time guidelines for homework in each subject. If your child is working too long or is completing homework too quickly, contact the respective teachers in order to make adjustments to the work load.

General Guidelines for Homework

First and Second Grade:

Twenty minutes each for reading, language arts and mathematics

Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grade:

Twenty minutes for language arts, twenty-five minutes each for reading and mathematics, and twenty minutes for either science or social studies

Sixth Grade:

Thirty minutes each for reading, mathematics, language arts and either science or social studies

Seventh and Eighth Grade:

Thirty minutes each for reading, mathematics, language arts, science and social studies

Parents of bright or gifted children should be aware of these guidelines because frequently your children will finish their work very quickly. However, you must be aware that these children must learn the same work habits and attitudes that all students must learn; therefore adjustments should be made to the nature of their homework in order that they receive the appropriate benefit.

Non-discriminatory Policy

The Birchwood School recruits and admits students of any race, color or ethnic origin to all its rights, privileges, programs and activities. In addition, the school will not discriminate on the basis of race, color or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational programs and athletics/extracurricular activities. Furthermore, the school is not intended to be an alternative to court or administrative agency ordered, or public school district initiated desegregation.

The Birchwood School will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or ethnic origin in the hiring of its certified or non-certified personnel.

Attendance and Punctuality

Parents are responsible for their child's attendance at school. Students must attend school on all days which are not altered by emergency or valid excuse from parents or guardians. We prefer that doctor and dental appointments be made during non-school hours whenever possible.

Parents should notify the school by phone on the day a child is absent. If we do not receive a phone call the student will be considered truant. If a child is absent for an extended period, parents may get assignments from the child's teachers so that the work may be done at home.

If a child's absence is excused, the child will be allowed to make up work with no deduction in grade.

Parents are also responsible that a child arrives at school in a timely manner so that the child will be ready for class at the designated starting time.

School Dress Code

Our dress code reflects our desire to maintain an academic atmosphere and does not reflect personal or administrative opinions about dress or style. Our dress code is intended to minimize personal and social distractions connected with young people's preoccupation of fashion, and help students focus on their academic responsibilities.

We ask parents to understand the letter and spirit of our dress code, and help us head off problems before the school must exercise discipline.

Boys:

- Shirts: Polo shirts, collared shirts, short or long sleeved. Turtlenecks
Colors: navy blue, forest green, white, red.
Slacks: Solid khaki, navy blue, black. Students may not wear excessively baggy styles, cargo pants, bell-bottoms. Shorts are permitted during warm weather.
- Sweaters: Pull-over or cardigan. Long-sleeved or sweater-vest. During the winter months we also permit sweatshirts without logos.
Colors: Navy blue, forest green, white, black, red.
- Hair: Off the ears, off the collar and out of the eyes.

Girls:

- Blouses: Polo shirts, collared, short or long-sleeved. Turtle-necks.
Colors: navy blue, forest green, white, red.
- Slacks or Capris: Solid khaki, navy blue, black
- Skirts or Culottes:
Solid khaki, navy blue, black. No shorter than 2 inches above the knee.
- Jumpers: Solid khaki, navy blue, forest green, navy blue plaid, forest green plaid. Jean or denim jumpers are not permitted.
- Sweaters: Pull-over or cardigan. Long-sleeved or sweater-vest. During the winter months we also permit sweatshirts without logos.
Colors: Navy blue, forest green, white, black, red.

Gym Attire:

- T-shirts: Gray, white or Birchwood T-shirts
- Gym shorts: Navy blue, black, gray
- Sweatshirts and sweat pants:
Gray, white, forest green, navy blue, red.

Note: Sandals, Crocs, Clogs or other open shoes, boots - all are safety concerns

Note: If dress codes standards are not met, students will receive a reminder and a note will go home reminding parents about specific dress code issues.

Academic Reporting Policies

Parents will receive pupil progress reports four times per year following each grading period. After the second quarter, there will be a parent-teacher conference for all students in Kindergarten through seventh grade. Eighth grade conferences will be held in September as a part of the Ben Franklin Initiative.

Reporting will include:

1. Daily work and homework.
2. Test and quiz results.
3. Academic progress in relation to the class and other objective standards.
4. Academic progress in relation to the individual.
5. Social adjustment and character development

In addition, if a child is having any academic problems at school, we will notify parents through the progress report which is issued mid-quarter. Please note that students who are progressing successfully will **not** receive this report. If parents receive this report, it is their responsibility to send the report back to school signed. Parents and teachers can then discuss strategies to help the student.

Care of School Property

If students have a part in the care and appearance of the school they will also take pride in their school and have a sense of ownership. To this end, students will have cleaning assignments at the end of each school day. Seventh and eighth grade students will help in the oversight of the students' work.

Students and their parents are responsible for any vandalism or misuse of school property and will be required to repair or replace any item which has been defaced, damaged, or destroyed by malice or misuses.

Teacher Certification and Qualifications

According to state regulations, teachers in private schools must hold a college degree from a four-year accredited institution. It is not necessary that they hold a teaching certificate. The State of Ohio certifies private school teachers with a private school teaching credential.

Birchwood maintains the following qualifications and accountability measures for teachers:

1. Teachers must learn and adapt to our system of education, learning the rationale and research behind our approach to education.
2. Teachers are held accountable for the quality of education they provide. Teachers must meet pupil performance objectives yearly.
3. Teachers must evidence professional progress. We expect our teachers to visit benchmark schools, maintain membership in their respective professional organizations, stay abreast of current publications in their field, attend workshops and/or complete additional coursework.
4. Teachers are expected to work closely with their colleagues; therefore they must maintain a professional and personal demeanor which promotes harmony and collaboration.
5. Teachers are expected to model the same character and virtue that we hope to instill in our students.

School Hours
Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures

School doors open at 8:00 a.m. Parents should not drop their children off at school before this time unless arrangements have been made with the school office. A teacher or class aide will meet arriving students.

Students should be in their seats, ready for class work at 8:15 a.m. Otherwise they will be marked tardy.

Students will be dismissed from class at 3:20 p.m. Their transportation should be waiting in the parking lot unless other arrangements have been made directly with the school office. Teachers will remain with students in the pick-up area until 3:30 p.m. at which time the remaining children will be escorted to the after school program.

Student Safety

Drills:

Fire, tornado, rapid dismissals and safety/lock-down drills are conducted through the year. Students should move through the drill silently and obey the direction of the adults in charge.

First Aide:

First aid will be administered for minor scrapes and cuts. In the event of a serious emergency requiring professional attention parents will be notified immediately. For this reason, parents must maintain up-to-date emergency information at the school.

In case of illness or injury, the school will care for the child until parents arrive or until parents make other arrangements for prompt care.

Medication:

In order for your child to receive any medication at school, the following must be followed:

1. A written request must be obtained from the physician and the parent/guardian before any medication may be administered by school personnel. The request must include instruction as to the name of the medication, dosage, time and duration, and possible side effects.
2. The medication must be in its original container and have an affixed label including the student's name, name of medication, dosage, method of administration and time of administration.
3. New request forms must be submitted each school year and when a medication order changes. If your child is taken off the medication or will no longer receive it at school, please send a dated note for our files.
4. The medication and signed permission forms must be brought to the school by the parent/guardian.

Searches of School Property:

All property of the school, including students' desks and lockers as well as their contents, any be searcher or inspected at any time without notice. School personnel have an unrestricted right to search these structures as well as any containers, book bags, purses or articles of clothing that are left unattended on school property.

Searches of Student's Person and Personal Property:

The search of a student's person or handbag currently carried is permissible when there is any suspicion that the student may be carrying contraband. Contraband, for purposes here, shall include but is not limited to any weapon, illegal drug, drug paraphernalia, or other item, the possession of which is prohibited by law or by school property.

Refund Policy

Our refund policy applies only to students attending Birchwood School by means of a voucher from the Cleveland Scholarship Program. When such a voucher student leaves Birchwood School within the academic year we will prorate the year's tuition by the day the child was in school and we will reimburse all remaining funds.

Admissions Policy

Admission procedures for pupils currently enrolled:

1. Intent to enroll is due at the end of February of each year.
2. Final registration for the following year is due March 15th. Fees for Materials, Computer lab, and Spanish are due at the time of registration. Parents sign the enrollment agreement.
3. Last date to withdraw from the enrollment agreement is April 15th.

Admission procedures for new pupils:

1. Parents interview with director, submit student's academic records and complete application.
2. Student visits the school for at least ½ day.
3. Student is tested in math, reading and writing.
4. Notice of admission given no later than April 15th.
5. Parents sign the enrollment agreement by April 30th.
6. Parents submit the following non-refundable fees with the enrollment agreement:
 - a. \$150.00 new student fee
 - b. Registration fees

General admission policies:

1. The school must have copies of the student's academic and medical records.
2. All pupils are accepted on a probationary basis. Continuance in the school is determined by the child's academic and behavioral performance, and upon the ability of the school to serve the student.

Withdrawal Policy

At the time of student withdrawal, all student records will be forwarded to the receiving school upon payment of all obligations.