



# Birchwood Community High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 111444  
**LEA** Warrington  
**Inspection number** 278699  
**Inspection dates** 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Patrick Geraghty HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Brock Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Birchwood
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Warrington, Cheshire WA3 7PT
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 827322
<b>Number on roll</b>	906	<b>Fax number</b>	01925 812570
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Barry Sanson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2 May 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sheila Yates

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	278699

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Birchwood Community High School is situated in the New Town area of Warrington and was built 20 years ago. Some 69% of learners come from the Birchwood area, with the remainder drawn from about 20 primary schools in other parts of the town. The school is usually oversubscribed despite falling rolls locally.

Birchwood ward is ranked within the 20% most deprived wards nationally. The school intake is mainly white British at about 96.2%. The school has a full comprehensive intake, which is broadly at the national average for ability. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is around the national average. At the time of the inspection, there were 131 learners on the special educational needs register. A strong emphasis is placed on inclusion, care and guidance and in promoting cultural and sporting activity and community partnerships. The school is a specialist business and enterprise college.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's assessment that this is a good school with many outstanding features. The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding aspects. Pupils achieve good standards and make good progress. There is a broad and rich curriculum, which is enhanced by a wide range of external partnerships and community links. Progression to further education is very good. An excellent extension studies programme and extracurricular provision further enrich opportunities for pupils to pursue and develop their interests. Care, advice and guidance are outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary and the school offers an environment where pupils are safe and able to advance their self-confidence and motivation. Pupils enjoy school. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. Leadership is outstanding from the headteacher and a very able senior management team. The self evaluation demonstrates that management understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Middle management is good and develops within a culture where responsibility is nurtured and shared. Governance is very good, and committed to maintaining and developing high standards and close involvement within the local community. The school recognises the need to raise standards in mathematics generally and in science at Key Stage 3. There is some inconsistency in the effectiveness of assessment, because of variations in the quality and frequency of marking. Rigorous strategies have been implemented to address these issues and inspectors consider that much progress has been made.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards at Key Stage 3 in science.
- Raise standards in mathematics.
- Improve the quality and frequency of marking.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement and standards are good. Pupils' standards are broadly in line with the national average when they enter the school. In 2005, standards at the end of Year 9 were also generally in line with the national average, progress from Year 7 being overall satisfactory. Progress in English was above the national average for similar schools whereas progress in mathematics and science was below the national average. Boys made less progress than girls and there was some underachievement by lower ability pupils.

By the end of Year 11, pupils make good progress. Outstanding results in music, drama, physical education and art, together with the introduction of vocational courses, have had a major impact. In 2005, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above was above the national average and an improvement from 2004. Boys and girls made equally good progress and very few pupils left with no qualification. The school recognises that standards in science at Key Stage 3 and in

mathematics have been below average and has taken action to bring about improvements. Evidence from lesson observations and the school's tracking procedures indicates that the school is on target to achieve the desired improvements and meet its agreed targets.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress. The 'Reading Challenge' initiative has helped many pupils to significantly improve their reading age. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress. There is good provision for the gifted and talented.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. The provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils develop into mature, confident and articulate young citizens by the time they leave. High rates of attendance reflect pupils' enjoyment and enthusiasm for school. The school is a very calm and orderly environment. Behaviour is exemplary and any problems are monitored very well. Opportunities to interact with the community and develop teamwork skills make a significant contribution to pupils' social development, self-confidence and motivation. Pupils are very committed to participate in and organise events which benefit the school and community. They value their own cultural heritage and the rich diversity of other cultures in the world. A well developed link with a school in South Africa has supported their personal development particularly well. Pupils are expected to take responsibilities and they respond with enthusiasm through the very active school council, peer support groups and extensive opportunities for leadership roles in extra curricular activities. Participation in sport and extra curricular activities is very high. Relationships at all levels are excellent. Work to promote good race relations and equality of opportunity is a strong element of the school's culture and allows pupils to develop their sense of care and concern for others.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's view that teaching and learning are good. There is a significant proportion of outstanding teaching. The school invests a lot of time and effort in promoting teaching and learning strategies and advanced skills teachers are effectively engaged in sharing good practice. Support assistants and support teachers make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. In outstanding lessons teachers have infectious enthusiasm, and set high levels of challenge at a brisk pace. Skilful questioning and excellent use of group and presentational formats elicits from pupils sustained concentration, enthusiasm and excellent progress. Such lessons are thoroughly prepared and use a variety of approaches to promote learning. For example, outstanding practice coupled with a sensitive approach to developing creativity and

promoting the expression of ideas was observed across the visual and performing arts. Information and communication technology (ICT) was used effectively in many lessons to enhance presentations and provide visual stimulation. In less effective lessons, there is an absence of sparkle because teachers dominate and provide too few opportunities for pupils to explain or take an active part in thinking things out for themselves.

The use of assessment data is being increasingly effective in enhancing performance, setting targets and tracking progress. Most pupils know their targets, how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There is some inconsistency in the effectiveness of assessment because of variations in the quality and frequency of marking.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils enjoy a rich, exciting and varied curriculum which meets their individual needs, aptitudes and aspirations. There is a wide range of collaborative and partnership arrangements which enhance vocational courses, work experience programmes and community links. Pupils have a very good understanding of their education options between the ages of 14 to 19 and a high proportion continue their education at local colleges. The imaginative and flexible extension studies programme enriches provision by giving pupils experiences above those usually observed. Further enrichment is provided by an outstanding range of extracurricular activities, which enables pupils to pursue their interests in sport, music, drama, technology and business. Pupils voice their enthusiasm and appreciation for this provision and their levels of participation are very high.

The school's achievement of specialist business and enterprise college status has had a very positive impact on work across all subject areas and within extra-curricular activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides excellent care, advice and support for all pupils. Pupils are valued, trusted and respected. They feel safe and secure in school. Procedures to ensure health, safety and child protection are excellent. The school's tutorial support programme is very effective. Well planned and innovative programmes for pupils include such activities as anger management and the youth achievement award.

Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent.

Pupils with statements of special educational need benefit from well structured individual education plans that contain good subject specific guidance for teachers and support staff. Vulnerable pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties may spend time in the Link Centre. The high quality of support for pupils is valued by the vast majority of parents.

Pupils are provided with excellent advice and support by academic, pastoral and support staff. The transition of pupils from primary school and progression to post-16 provision are very well managed. The Learner Services and the Link Centre provide outstanding personal support and have extensive links with external services to promote health, option choices and careers. Links with Connexions are excellent.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school that leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is both outstanding and visionary. She is ably supported by a strong senior leadership team. Strategic and operational planning are effective. The school's self-evaluation demonstrates a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development. There is good communication with staff which enhances a harmonious but challenging working environment. Staff development is linked to key strategic and operational targets. Performance management is well embedded. Targets are set and monitored systematically to aid improvement. There is a very strong commitment by all staff to ensure that pupils achieve their full potential. Middle managers are well informed and there is much good practice at departmental level. In addition, the middle managers who work as part of the extended leadership team make an invaluable contribution to the development of the school. Data is used well to monitor learners' progress. A culture of responsibility and engagement enriches staff and pupils alike. Identified underachievement is addressed with robust strategies.

Governance is very good. The involvement of the governors in challenging the school to improve and in monitoring progress is good. Governors play an important role in supporting the school's active role within the community. Views of parents, pupils and other stakeholders are sought and acted upon.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are managed effectively. Accommodation is very well maintained. Finances are sound and the school offers very good value for money. The high standards of pupils' personal development, strong leadership and excellent support and guidance demonstrate that the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement.





## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our two days at your school. We particularly enjoyed talking to so many of you about your work, interests and how much you enjoy and give to the school. We found that your school is a good school with many outstanding features.

What we liked most about your school.

- Your excellent behaviour and the positive approach to your lessons.
- The school is well led. The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard because they want you to do the very best you can.
- You make good progress in a safe and challenging environment.
- The majority of teaching is good and some is outstanding.
- The teachers and support staff provide outstanding care and guidance. Extra support and working more with your teachers, mentors and support staff is helping you to make better progress.
- You enjoy school and make an important contribution to it through the school council and through the variety of mentoring and extra-curricular groups that you organise and lead so well.
- The school has excellent community links which help your learning opportunities.
- Your school has many excellent facilities including in sport which you use well.
- You are very well prepared for work or college after you leave school.

Your school needs to:

- improve examination results in mathematics
- improve examination results in science in Year 9
- improve how, in some cases, your work is marked.

We are sure that you will keep up your excellent behaviour and enthusiasm for learning and will make even better progress.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you well for your future education.