



Birchwood High School

your dreams, your future, our challenge

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am pleased to be writing to you as the new Head of Year 10 and would like to introduce myself for those of you who do not know me yet and set out my priorities. I have been at the school for five years, with a variety of roles in the Maths faculty. I am very excited to take on the role of Head of Year 10, as it presents an incredible opportunity to support the students as they head into the most challenging 18 months of their education.

Further to my initial correspondence before Christmas, I would like to share more specifics about my vision for Year 10 and what support I would ask of you at home. Taking over as Head of Year 10 in January does allow the year group to continue with all of the good traits we have, but to refine some of the areas in which we are falling short. Regardless of what changes, I want to ensure you that above all else, the safety and care of your child is our priority. Bullying, abuse, violence or unkindness are not permitted whilst at Birchwood High School, and any signs of these will be investigated and sanctioned accordingly.

From January, my goal will be the raising of standards for behaviour, uniform and punctuality. I am aware that lesson time is being lost due to misbehaviour, as well as members of staff having confrontations with students during both break and lunch, both of these I would seek to address. To improve behaviour in lessons, I and other teachers will be in correspondence with you from the outset when standards are not being met and would appreciate your support so that school and home present a united front. I am aware that a number of instances of misbehaviour and poor choices take place outside of lessons at break or lunch so, from January, I propose to limit the number of students walking around the school site in a group to three. We are seeing students walking around the site in groups of 10 or 12 which puts our staff in a very uncomfortable position when giving instructions, or challenging uniform. It is necessary for students to understand how potentially intimidating a large group of teenagers can be. Students are of course welcome to remain in groups of any size in their social area, or in the café.

Uniform is varied currently, so I would like to provide clarity. Students should not be wearing jewellery such as bracelets, rings, or necklaces whilst in school. We are seeing too many items of jewellery being lost during the school day, but they are also against our uniform policy. Form tutors will be advised to confiscate this jewellery if it is seen, from the start of the new term, with sanctions to follow for avoiding this guidance. Large earrings or hooped earrings will also be confiscated. Students should not be wearing trainers during the school day, other than with medical exemption or in isolated instances authorised by the Head of Year. Students should not be arriving to school with fake nails or eyelashes - I am aware that some students will have these for the Christmas period but please book appointments to have them removed before return to school. Whilst the weather is cold, I advise that coats, hats, gloves and scarves may be worn outside, but hoodies and other jumpers may not. Coats must be removed upon entering a building.

The vast majority of Year 10 have excellent attendance, but there are too many taking frequent days off for sickness or unauthorised reasons. There is a known correlation between attendance in school, and GCSE outcome. As parents and carers, you will know your child best but if you can encourage them into school when they are a little under the weather, that will be greatly received. During the day, small groups of students linger unnecessarily near social spaces or behind C Block so that they arrive late to their next lesson. It is essential that students arrive promptly to their lessons so that lessons are not disrupted and learning time is maximised.

Finally, I have a reminder to share. If you have any concerns, questions or if you have important news to share with us (illness, bereavement, change in behaviour, etc) please contact your child's form tutor or myself. I am pleased to be working with you and meeting you in person.

Kind regards,
Mr Matt Loney
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