

THE BIRCHWOOD HANDBOOK

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Birchwood's Mission Statement

The Birchwood School, in a mutually respectful partnership with families and the community, and within a secure, structured and caring environment, will meet the individual needs of our students in order to motivate and enable them to reach their full potential as productive, ethical members of the community

Clarkstown Central School District
62 Old Middletown Road
New City, New York 10956

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About the Clarkstown Central School District

- Clarkstown Central School District is located in Rockland County, approximately 25 miles northwest of New York City. Consistently rated as one of the top five safest cities in America in the annual Morgan Quitno Safest Cities survey, Clarkstown is an upper middle class suburban community with a population of about 85,000 residents.

A large district serving more than 8,400 students from a 31 square mile area, Clarkstown prides itself on fostering a small school climate, community involvement and a focus on the individual in its nine elementary schools, three middle schools, two high schools, and K-12 alternative education center. The district offers innovative programs to its students through web based technology such as Science 21, Dreambox, Achieve 3000 and Google Chrome. It is also one of the first districts in Rockland County to create a dedicated task force against Bullying and implement a Bullying Prevention policy. District buildings have earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's prestigious EnergyStar, the national symbol for superior energy efficiency and environmental protection which places us in the top 25 percent of commercial facilities in the nation. The district works in close partnership with the Clarkstown community, a population that highly values and is exceptionally supportive of public education.

Our Mission

- CCSD, in partnership with the community, will meet the individual academic and social-emotional needs of all students within a safe environment while empowering them to reach their full potential in a complex society.

Our Vision

- CCSD is where students become well-rounded critical thinkers able to communicate effectively and become responsible, ethical contributing members of a global society. As life-long learners, students will be able to use their respective talents and skills to collaborate, innovate and positively change their community and the world.

Strategic Goals

- **Goal 1:** The district will ensure high standards by using a variety of research-based curriculum and instructional models and professional development to create opportunities for all students to become critical thinkers and life-long learners.
- **Goal 2:** Utilizing technology effectively as a tool, students will communicate, construct learning, and demonstrate problem-solving and decision-making skills.
- **Goal 3:** The district will allocate resources in alignment with learning goals to create facilities which enhance and maintain technologically advanced, efficient and safe environments that are conducive to learning.
- **Goal 4:** Students will take ownership of their actions by demonstrating self-advocacy, initiative, responsibility and critical thinking skills.

Introduction

Welcome to the Birchwood School. This handbook is intended to familiarize you with the school's policies. The Birchwood School staff has developed the student handbook with careful attention given to every aspect of the program. In this handbook, families will find answers to questions they may have concerning Birchwood School's policies and practices.

Birchwood School

The Birchwood School, located in Rockland County, New York, is in a suburb of New York City, and is a public school facility of the Clarkstown Central School District. It is a day school providing education using the therapeutic milieu. The school provides a highly structured and individualized school program of remediation and therapeutic rehabilitation. The Birchwood School is for students ages five through twenty-one, whose disabilities require a special educational setting and related services to meet their unique management, academic, physical and social needs.

Birchwood creates a supportive, reassuring environment for school-aged children having significant emotional, behavioral and learning problems. It provides an environment which responds to a child's needs with compassion, understanding and guidance. The school provides a psychotherapeutic approach for the child both in school and at home. At Birchwood, students have the opportunity to succeed by allowing them to proceed at their own rate. Students know they can turn to caring people for help in dealing with the many challenges they will meet in their everyday lives within their home, school and community.

The Birchwood program has a fully accredited staff of specialists in both clinical and special education disciplines who work to effectively integrate educational and clinical services. Birchwood's goal is to prepare students to return to an appropriate program provided by their home school district. Birchwood does accept students from neighboring school districts. Tuition for students attending Birchwood is paid for by their home school districts.

Website

Birchwood has developed a Web site that includes a calendar for the year, news of upcoming events and special announcements. The address for this Web site is: <http://www.ccsd.edu/Domain/17>

Visitors

For safety and educational reasons:

1. All visitors must enter the school through the main entrance and report to the security guard. Identification tags will be issued to visitors who will be traveling within the building.
2. The instructional day of the students is too important for interruptions. As such, all lunches, homework, books, projects, etc. must be left at the main office.
3. Parents requesting their child's release during school hours must sign the school log at the security desk and provide the reason, hour and date for the early dismissal. Written permission from parents is mandatory in order to have other adults pick up their child.
4. Please have a seat in the office when waiting for your child or for a conference. Under **no** circumstances are visitors permitted in the classroom area without prior consent from the principal.

Site-Based Management Committee

The Birchwood School Site-Based Management Committee is comprised of teachers, the principal, parents and other faculty members. It provides an avenue for interested parties to discuss building issues and an opportunity for families to actively participate in building level decisions. The Committee meets every other month and welcomes your suggestions. In past years, the committee organized a garage sale to raise money for Birchwood programs, helped coordinate a school-wide tile project and supported numerous other fundraising initiatives to support the program. There are many other items on the agenda for the upcoming year and we hope to recruit more people to support our efforts.

Birchwood Therapist

Each Birchwood student and his/her family are assigned to a therapist. Students generally see their therapist once a week in order to deal with educational, personal, social and family dynamics. If a student has the need for an additional therapy session, the student must communicate this to the classroom teacher. If the teacher feels the situation warrants an additional session with the therapist, it will be arranged accordingly. Moreover, any parent who feels his/her child is in need of an additional session with the therapist, may call the student's homeroom teacher or the parent's therapist to request extra therapy time for the student.

Ongoing therapy is a required part of our program. Students are required to attend their sessions. Any student electing not to participate in a particular therapy time is required to inform the therapist of this decision. Situations in which students do not attend therapy sessions will be resolved on an individual basis.

Birchwood is proud of its team approach. Teachers and therapists work closely together to help students achieve their maximum potential. This can sometimes cause a student to question the confidentiality of the therapy sessions. Although the therapist will not disclose specific information without a student's permission, the student's well-being is the prime concern of both the teacher and the therapist.

Occasionally, a breach of confidentiality may be required if during therapy sessions it is revealed that the student's safety is in jeopardy (i.e. drug abuse, self-destructive behavior, etc.). It is the staff's obligation at such times to inform the student's parents of their concern in order to ensure the student's safety.

The school office is open during some vacation days, which are announced in the monthly newsletter. If there is an emergency during those days, parents/guardians may call the Birchwood office and arrangements will be made to have a therapist return your call. The Behavioral Health Response Team is a highly-trained crisis management unit that assists local residents, with first responders and behavioral health agencies providing on-scene evaluation, treatment and crisis intervention in the community. Anyone can make a referral to The Behavioral Response Team. They can be reached at [\(845\) 517-0400](tel:8455170400).



Olweus Program

Birchwood is proud to have implemented the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program in our school. Olweus is a nationally and internationally recognized program designed to reduce and to prevent bullying problems among school children and to improve peer relations. The Olweus Program has been implemented in more than a dozen countries around the world and in thousands of schools in the United States. There is clear evidence showing that the program does indeed reduce bullying among children. Furthermore, the data indicates that the social climate of classrooms is also improved with the Olweus Program. In the past one activity that we have used to promote our Olweus Program was to hold a Friendship Fair, in which all of the elementary and middle school classes developed projects focusing on the theme of Friendship. The projects included: planting seeds to highlight the process of growing and nurturing friendship, designing individual friendship themed quilt squares which were then sewn together as a Friendship Quilt, creating a fruit salad demonstrating how our differences can blend together, sand art and T-shirt creations as well. Our high school students volunteered in all of the classes to assist the younger students with their projects. Our day was capped off by a delicious barbeque! Another project was the development of a Friendship Garden, in which the older students assisted the elementary and middle school students plant their seedling in a garden. Olweus activities are held weekly throughout the year in each elementary and middle school class. Weekly classroom meetings are a key component of the Olweus Program, where themed topics, both student and teacher initiated, are discussed. Anti-bullying topics are also incorporated into the educational curricula, especially in the English and Social Studies classes. Our overall goals are to reduce bullying episodes and to encourage students to take a stance when they observe bullying behavior. We seek to empower students to feel more comfortable reporting bullying to a significant adult and to foster a school community which gives a clear message of "Zero Tolerance" for bullying behavior. Olweus has been extremely successful at Birchwood. The students look forward to the weekly classroom meetings and have been enthusiastic participants in the program. If you have any questions about the program, feel free to contact Susan Buchweitz, Clinical Supervisor.



School Rules

1. Student safety and well-being are prime concerns of the school. Students may not engage in any physical contact such as wrestling, headlocks, etc. Students may not tease, bully or threaten others.
2. Upon coming off the bus, students will report directly to their homeroom (without stopping at the nurse, cafeteria, bathroom, etc.).
3. Possession or suspicion of drug and/or alcohol use in school (or on the bus), or suspicion of being under the “influence” at school are causes for immediate suspension. A parent conference will be necessary before the student will be allowed to return to school. Emergency services may be called.
4. Weapons of any kind are not permitted in school.
5. Smoking is not permitted on school property, on the school bus or on field trips. This includes the display of cigarettes and any passing or selling of cigarettes. Lighters, matches or other smoking or vaporizing devices are also not permitted to be displayed in school. These items will be confiscated and returned at the discretion of the principal.
6. Students will be responsible for payment of any deliberate destruction and/or loss of school property.
7. All visitors must report to the security desk for a visitor’s badge. Unauthorized persons are not allowed on school grounds and will be reported to the police.
8. All students must remain in their classroom at dismissal until called for their bus.
9. Cell phones are not to be used or displayed in common areas such as the hallway, cafeteria, etc. High school students may earn the privilege to text during homeroom and lunch. If a need arises that requires the use of a telephone, the student must obtain a pass to use the office phone.
10. Mp3 players, iPods, iPads players or radios may be brought to school, but the following rules apply:
 - a. They may only be played at times and in areas designated by the teachers (never in the hall).
 - b. Headphones and earbuds are not to be worn in the halls.
11. Students may leave the school building only with a teacher’s permission.
12. Students may only ride on their assigned bus. Bus changes will only be allowed with the principal’s permission.
 - a. If a student is to be picked up by a family member, written permission from the parent is required.
 - b. Any student being picked up must be signed out in the office.
 - c. Students with driving privileges are not permitted to transport other students.
 - d. Students wishing to choose alternative means of transportation, e.g. by bicycle or public transportation, need a note of approval from their parents and the principal.
13. Students must maintain appropriate behavior when riding on the bus. Any violation of the bus rules will subject the student to disciplinary action, which could result in the denial of transportation privileges.
14. Students may not drive to school without prior approval/permission from the principal.
15. Students must adhere to the school dress code. Clothing that promotes drugs, drinking, etc. is not allowed. A copy of the districts’ dress code is contained in this handbook.

Student Support Services/Crisis Intervention

An important component of the Birchwood program is the presence of a Student Support teacher. One of the roles of the Student Support teacher is to assist students and staff with prevention and de-escalation of crises. Students are considered to be in a crisis if they cause a disruption in the building by verbally acting-out or exhibiting “risk behavior” which represents a risk to themselves or others. The classroom teacher will be proactive in trying to prevent or deescalate the crisis. However, if the behavior persists or escalates, the teacher will encourage the student to work with the Student Support teacher. The student remains with the Student Support teacher in order to regain control and to work towards returning to the classroom. The Student Support teacher encourages the student to discuss what is bothering him/her, and to think about alternative choices and other ways to handle the situation. In this way, the crisis can be viewed as a learning experience for the student. At the Birchwood School, teamwork is key. The classroom teacher, the therapist and the principal, along with the Student Support teacher, are all actively involved in crisis prevention.

Student Support Room Procedures

The Student Support Room at Birchwood contains four individual cubicles and a staff area. This room was established to assist students who are not able to maintain appropriate classroom behavior or who have clearly broken a rule, but who do not require at-home suspension.

When a teacher assigns a student to the Student Support room for a specific period of time, he or she will leave instructions for that student. In this way, the Student Support staff knows exactly what is required of each student. Students are expected to demonstrate appropriate behaviors, without socializing or interfering with other students assigned to the Student Support room.

Sometimes, a student will request permission to go to the Student Support Room for a period. Reasons for this request may vary from needing a quiet place to work, to simply wanting time alone with one’s thoughts.



Quiet Room Policies

When working with students who experience social, emotional and/or behavioral problems, it is sometimes necessary to separate them from the classroom environment in order to help them manage problems that they may be experiencing. The “quiet rooms” at Birchwood were designed for this purpose: to provide a safe and therapeutic space away from the classroom so that the student’s emotional needs can be addressed on a one-to-one basis with the supervising staff.

There are several ways in which the quiet room can be utilized. If a student feels the need for quiet time, he/she can initiate the request. When learning how to deal with problems appropriately, it is important that students learn to recognize which situations trigger inappropriate reactions. When students are able to consciously identify these triggers, they are then better able to utilize strategies and choose more appropriate avenues to deal with those feelings. This type of self-awareness enables students to progress beyond their old habits of response as they learn to choose more appropriate ways to express their needs and frustrations. Some students have an arrangement with their teachers to use the quiet room when they begin to feel overwhelmed or need time apart from the group. Some students benefit from using the quiet room punching bag to “de-stress.” Other students avail themselves of the floor mats to exercise and relax. Utilized in this manner, the quiet room has become a means of self-monitoring, as well as a coping technique. Students know that they can go to the quiet room to calm down. There they are provided with time to talk with adults who support them and help them reflect on their feelings, behaviors and emotional needs. Once the student has regained control and feels comfortable, he/she may return to the classroom setting with the supervising staff member’s consent.

There are times when the quiet room is utilized by staff as a prescribed management technique. In general, however, this is not the first behavior management strategy to be employed. When a student demonstrates inappropriate behavior (i.e. behavior that impedes his or her learning or that of others), our

staff first implements various behavioral interventions within the classroom, providing support to address the problem behavior. The range of interventions may include verbal reminders, classroom behavioral contracts, creating a distraction free environment, and opportunities to speak with the classroom teacher, a therapist or a member of the Student Support team. The staff only progresses to removing the student from the classroom when those alternate interventions prove unsuccessful and the student's behavior creates an unsafe situation.

Certainly, when a student demonstrates behaviors that jeopardize his/her safety and/or the safety of others, the quiet room can be a necessary and immediate resort. During these situations, the quiet room provides a safe haven to enable the staff to closely monitor the student and evaluate him/her to determine the next course of action. Various members of the staff, including the building principal, the Student Support teacher, the student's therapist and the homeroom teacher, then determine the appropriate measures to be taken. If an incident involves self-injurious or other harmful behaviors, parents are promptly informed.

Quiet Room Guidelines

The use of the quiet room is one important management strategy that helps students to regain composure before resuming classroom activity. The following guidelines must be observed in order to ensure the safety and security of the student:

- The quiet room must be supervised by a staff member at all times.
- The quiet room must provide the means by which adults can monitor the student, both visually and auditorily.
- The quiet room must have an unbreakable observation window located in the door to permit continuous observation of the student and any staff member in the quiet room.
- The quiet room may not be locked from either side of the door.
- The quiet room may not contain items or fixtures that may be harmful to students.
- The quiet room must allow students to exit should there be an emergency.
- The quiet room must be well ventilated, clean and well lit.
- The quiet room should be conducive to self-quieting behaviors.
- Use of the quiet room must be documented in the quiet room log.

Emergency Numbers

It is important that you notify the main office and the school nurse if there is a change in your emergency contact numbers, family physician or family dentist.

Breakfast and Lunch Program

The Clarkstown Central School District is a participant in the Free/Reduced Breakfast/Lunch Program. Some families may find it difficult to pay for their child's breakfast or lunch. If this is the case, please contact the principal regarding this confidential matter. A monthly menu is sent home with students. **A Free and Reduced Lunch Form must be filled out each year. One is enclosed in the Welcome Back Packet sent home at the beginning of the school year.**

Parents can set up a lunch account for their student on MySchoolBucks. This gives parents the convenience and flexibility of one account to securely pay for all of their student meals. MySchoolBucks has a FREE mobile app that is available for both iPhone and Android users in the App Store or Play Store! With the MySchoolBucks app, you can quickly and securely add money to your student's school meal account using your credit card, debit card or electronic check. Just login with the same username and password you use on the MySchoolBucks website.

Getting started is a simple three-step process!

1. Download the app or visit the MySchoolBucks homepage and click on "Sign Up Today".
2. Create a user profile with your email address, establish a password, and set up your security questions.
3. Add a Student to your account using the student's name, date of birth and/or student ID number. (Some schools and districts may require either the student's date of birth or student ID number.)

Now you're ready to make payments! Please regularly check your child's balance in this account. If your account has a negative balance, you will be contacted by one of the school's staff with a friendly reminder to update your account.

Lunchtime

One special aspect of the Birchwood School is the lunch period. Each homeroom eats lunch together in their individual classroom with the teacher and teaching assistant.

There are two lunch periods at Birchwood. The first lunch period is for the elementary and middle school students and staff. The second lunch period is for the high school students and staff. Students often accompany a teacher or teaching assistant to the cafeteria to pick up the lunches and bring them to the classroom. Lunches may be brought from home or ordered in the morning from a school menu.

A short period of time follows lunch in order to provide students with the opportunity for relaxation and for socialization with fellow students. Students may take advantage of the playground, pool table, computers and other available activities. Middle school and high school students may complete homework or assignments, while all students have an opportunity to receive extra help from teachers.

High school students may choose to spend time in the game room or in a structured activity in the gym. These sites are always supervised by staff members.

After School/Evening Activity Program

The Birchwood School runs some very special evening programs that occur at various times throughout the year. The goal of these programs is to provide each student with an opportunity to "go out" with his or her peers while receiving appropriate supervision. This creates an avenue for the students to socialize with peers in a structured, supportive and supervised atmosphere. Each program is geared for specific age levels; programs have included a barbecue night, obstacle course, tie-dying, music, basketball, volleyball, and other sports activities providing plenty of time for socialization. Students clearly enjoy and learn a great deal from these evening activity programs.

Summer Program

Birchwood School offers a six-week summer program. This program includes a regular academic schedule with the addition of daily swimming and periodic field trips for elementary and middle school students. Swimming is provided at Felix V. Festa Middle School. Transportation for the field trips and swimming is provided by the Clarkstown Central School District Transportation Department.

Summer school affords Birchwood high school students many opportunities, including making up assignments and/or failed courses, beginning new courses, and receiving academic reinforcement and remedial assistance. Students fourteen years and older may participate in a summer work program for part of the school day. This provides valuable work experience and training in areas, such as carpentry, childcare, technology and clerical work.

Emergency School Closing

As part of expanding the reach of our communications during emergency conditions the district continues to use Twitter (twitter.com/ccsdschools), the District website (<http://www.ccsd.edu/>), email, phone communications (staff and student families), and the New City Patch.

- Parents can call Clarkstown's voice mail system: **845-639-6300, press 9, and then press 4 for the Inclement Weather Mailbox.**
- Clarkstown Central School District's website, www.ccsd.edu, click on **Parents** and then **Emergency/Cancellation Notification**
- Phone Communication: The district's automated notification system utilizes four phone numbers that you have designated as your contact information. **Please be sure to apprise the school throughout the year of any change in your selected phone numbers so that we may keep your information profile up-to-date and accurate.**
- Birchwood has also added an account to the Remind 101 system. Anyone who wishes additional information about this system should contact Randi. Standard text message rates apply, as determined by your cell phone plan.

Please review your unanticipated early release plans with your children. Examples (but not limited to) of days that we would use the unanticipated early release procedure would be if the school closes early due to the weather, an electrical outage or loss of heat. In preparation for these events, make sure that your emergency contact information is accurate and up to date.

Birchwood Bulletin

The Birchwood Bulletin is a monthly newsletter that we compose that details important events that occurred during the past month and outlines upcoming events. We also include current topics in education or issues that are relevant to our school. This has proven to be a valuable tool that keeps our families informed about our school. Please be on the lookout at the beginning of each month for the latest edition of the bulletin.



Transportation

Bus transportation is provided for every student. Students may ride only on their assigned bus and must be dropped off at their home stop. If a student is to be picked up by a family member, written permission from the parent is required and the person picking him/her up must sign out the student.

Students will maintain appropriate behavior while riding on the bus. Students who violate bus rules will be subject to disciplinary action, which could result in the denial of transportation privileges. Upon arrival at school, students must report directly to their homeroom class (no cafeteria, lavatory, etc.). At the end of the day, students must remain inside their classrooms until their bus is called. Those students with driving privileges are dismissed one minute prior to bus dismissal. Students are not permitted to ride another student's bus without consent from both parents.

Elementary:

Overview

Elementary classrooms are typically multi-grade self-contained classes with a teacher and two teaching assistants. Classes follow the district's curriculum maps which address all of the standards outlined for each grade by the state. However, the classes proceed through the maps and their embedded skills at a pace which allows for each student to master the skills before they move onto new content areas and new skills. The teacher closely follows each student's I.E.P. to help ensure that those skill deficits which are impeding the child's progress are addressed and remediated.

Students attend one or two special classes over the course of the day and the 8:1:1 ratio for those classes are maintained. The teaching assistants assigned to each class follow the students to those specials to help maintain continuity and to ease the transitions.

Interdisciplinary Approach

This year we are utilizing a different format for our OLWEUS class meetings. Each clinician is assigned an elementary or middle school class to work with. Each week the clinician "pushes" into the class and does a lesson or activity geared to the age of the students. The lessons are not just on the concept of "No Bullying," but focus on themes of friendship, kindness, tolerating differences, and "Paying it Forward." Activities consist of crafts, video clips, and stories where the students can discuss their feelings and share their acts of kindness.

Middle School:

Overview

The Birchwood middle school program offers 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students the opportunity to follow a grade level departmentalized schedule within a small, therapeutic environment. Homeroom classes are multi-grade level with a teacher and a teaching assistant following the 8:1:1 ratio. As the students transition through their daily schedule, several teachers and teaching assistants assume joint responsibilities for the student's instructional program. The teaching team continuously collaborates to address the student's academic and social needs. Teacher teams prove invaluable in assisting students as they make the academic and the social transition from elementary classes to middle school and eventually to high school.

The core academic classes in language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science follow the district's curriculum maps which address all the rigorous standards outlined for each grade by the state. However, teachers design, differentiate and pace their lessons based on student achievement and mastery before moving onto new content and new skill areas. In addition, teachers closely follow each student's I.E.P. to address those skill deficits, which are impeding the student's progress allowing them to develop to their highest potential.

All middle school students participate in physical education class and a world language class, Spanish. Elective classes include: art, music computers and recess for the 6th grade students to assist with the transition from elementary schedules to their new middle school responsibilities.

High School:

Overview

Birchwood's high school program consists of students in grades 9-12. Homeroom classes are multi-grade level within a small, structured therapeutic environment. Students are placed in one of six homerooms with special consideration given to a student's social and emotional needs. Each homeroom consists of a core group of students with a teacher and teaching assistant following the 8:1:1 ratio. Academic classes maintain a small class size which affords the students greater individualized instruction.

High school students follow a departmentalized schedule. Students participate in academic classes predicated on the Common Core State Standards. Core classes are differentiated to address individual needs as outlined in a student's Individualized Education Plan and to provide the optimum opportunity for growth and success. Additionally, students are given the opportunity to explore individual interests by participating in a variety of electives. The educational team in our high school program works collaboratively to ensure that the students' academic, social and emotional needs are being fully addressed. Together with teachers, teaching assistants, therapists and small classes, the perfect atmosphere is created for students to reach their true potential.

Furthermore, opportunities for socialization in a structured and supportive environment are often offered through courses given after school hours.

Homework and Study Skills

Homework is an integral part of education. Primarily, it is given to reinforce skills and, ultimately, to assist the child in school. When students do their homework, they have a greater understanding of what is being studied in class and are better prepared to participate and learn. The amount of time spent on homework varies depending on the grade level and on the child's needs. There are many benefits to homework, including:

- providing essential practice in building skills
- training students in good work habits
- learning how to budget time
- providing opportunities for student self-direction
- enriching and extending school experiences
- promoting student growth and responsibility
- providing make-up work for student absence

Good study habits are important. There is no quick, universal formula by which they can be acquired. They must be developed through constant guidance, effort and experience, both in and out of school. Parents can play important roles in the development of effective study skills and techniques. The following guidelines are simple suggestions. The extent to which they are followed will depend on the amount of supervised study required by the student:



1. Help your child arrange a regular, uninterrupted study time each day. His/her after school schedule should provide time for other activities as well as studying.
2. Provide an area that is quiet, well-lighted and away from family activities or any distractions.
3. Review your child's written work after it is completed. It should represent his/her best work. Help your child to locate and correct errors, emphasizing clarity and neatness, completeness and accuracy.

Driving Policy

Birchwood high school students may, under certain circumstances, apply for permission to drive to school. Certain procedures must be followed in order to obtain permission and students must adhere to the set rules and regulations for driving. The driving privilege is subject to continuous review.

I. PROCEDURE FOR PERMISSION TO DRIVE TO BIRCHWOOD SCHOOL

1. The student must present a written request to drive to school. The reasons he/she needs to drive to school should be included in the request.
2. The student must present written permission from his/her parent/guardian.
3. The student must bring in a valid New York State driver's license.
4. The homeroom teacher will present the above material to the principal.
5. The student must meet with the principal and homeroom teacher to review the driving rules.

II. RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR DRIVING

A. AUTOMATIC SUSPENSION OF PRIVILEGES

1. Any suspicion of being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, as determined by the principal, will result in an automatic suspension of privilege (reinstatement subject to review).
2. Leaving school grounds by car without permission will result in an automatic suspension of driving privilege (reinstatement subject to review).
3. Any report of driving another student, either to or from school grounds or BOCES, without prior permission, will result in an automatic suspension of driving privilege (reinstatement subject to review).

B. INFRACTIONS SUBJECT TO REVIEW OF PRIVILEGE:

1. Lateness and/or unexcused absence
2. Going out to the car during school hours without permission
3. Failure to park in student designated areas
4. Driving at speeds in excess of 10 MPH in the school parking lot
5. Refusing to follow staff directions

Driving to school is a privilege and is only granted to those who are able to handle this responsibility.

Guidance:



Guidance Services

Every student in grades six through twelve at Birchwood receives the services of the school counselor. Similar to other schools in the district, the school counselor at Birchwood monitors students' academic, career and personal/social development to ensure that all students are provided with a school experience that meets their individual needs and that allows them to reach their full potential. The school counselor is primarily accountable for monitoring all students' academic progress towards graduation requirements and coordinating with all of the other academic stakeholders to ensure complete collaboration. The school counselor is an integral member of all secondary-level CSE meetings and

works continuously with parents/guardians, teachers, clinicians and other staff to ensure that all academic information is current and accurate for every student.

In addition, the school counselor is also responsible for helping students choose an academic course load that is commensurate with their high school and post-secondary plans, which may include career/vocational services and/or college/post-secondary training. This includes, but is not limited to, exploring mainstreaming options, placement in career/vocational programs at Rockland BOCES, diversified work program placements, ACCES-VR services and assisting with college and financial aid applications.

Graduation Requirements

The New York State Board of Regents has raised the standards for all New York State students. The Board has set clear and high expectations for all students and has developed a standardized method to measure whether students are meeting these expectations. An outline of these new standards and requirements for graduation can be found by following the link below. Should you have questions regarding these mandated courses or Regents Exams, please contact the principal or the school counselor.



Diploma Requirements including Multiple Pathways:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/gradreq/Documents/CurrentDiplomaRequirements.pdf>

Diploma/Credential Requirements:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/gradreq/Documents/CurrentDiplomaCredentialSummary.pdf>

Credits

To be considered a senior, the student must have earned 13 credits.

To be considered a junior, the student must have earned 9 credits.

To be considered a sophomore, the student must have earned 4½ credits.

Transcript

The transcript is the official record of credit-bearing courses taken at the secondary level (grades 8-12). This document is sent to each student's home high school, as well as any colleges the student may wish to attend. There is no indication of special education on the transcript. The transcript is a record of a student's academic courses and his/her state exam grades in high school.

Mainstreaming

Each year, as part of the annual review process, the Committee on Special Education determines the least restrictive but most appropriate educational setting for each child. Part of that process includes discussion of mainstreaming options at the middle school and high schools. The committee also takes into consideration the student's: academic skills, social and emotional status, and school behavior. Students who participate in a split program will be transported to the appropriate school, usually before or after Birchwood classes. This interim step assists students in making the transition to less restrictive settings.

All students may participate in after school activities, clubs or sports at their home school. If a student is interested in pursuing this option, they should speak with their homeroom teacher, therapist or our guidance counselor. One of these individuals will coordinate this process.

BOCES/ Vocational Options

Students may enroll in occupational training courses offered by Rockland County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) for half days. Students typically need 11 credits and need to be a junior or senior to be considered for BOCES program placement.

The following courses are current options:

COMMUNICATIONS ACADEMY

Graphic Design & Communication

TV/Video & Multimedia Production

Cyber Security

CONSTRUCTION TRADES TECHNOLOGY
 Carpentry
 Electricity & Telecommunications Wiring
 Plumbing
 COSMETOLOGY
 Cosmetology
 CULINARY ARTS
 ACF Certified Culinary Arts
 HEALTH CAREERS ACADEMY
 Direct Care
 New Vision Nursing Program
 SECURITY & LAW
 Security & Law Enforcement
 AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY
 Auto Collision Technology
 NATEF/ASE Certified Auto Technology
 General Auto
 Small Engine Technology



Report Cards

The Birchwood School, as part of the Clarkstown Central School District, utilizes a standards based report card for elementary students. Report cards are issued on a trimester basis. Trimesters will end in December, March and June. A standards-based report card lists the most important skills students should learn in each subject at a particular grade level, which are aligned with grade level curriculum maps and the New York State Standards. For each grade level, all students will be expected to acquire a working knowledge of each subject and develop competence in applying that knowledge to meaningful tasks. Students receive a separate grade for each standard.

Standards-based report cards provide more consistency than traditional report cards because all students are evaluated on the same grade-appropriate skills. Parents can see exactly which skills and knowledge his/her child has learned.

All students in sixth through twelfth grades receive quarterly report cards generated through the eSchoolPLUS Program. Report cards are issued in November, January, April and June.

All report cards and progress reports will be delivered electronically through E-School on the Parent Portal.

E-School Parent Portal

The E-School Parent Portal is a valuable program that allows parents/guardians to access their child's important academic information on the internet. Continuing the district's efforts to be transparent and open regarding student achievement, the E-School Parent Portal currently allows all parents/guardians to access progress reports, report cards and attendance records while being able to confirm contact information, addresses, important medical information, etc.

If you would like to create an E-School Parent Portal account, please go online to the website <https://parentportal.eschooldata.com>. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us or follow the links for information on the district website at <http://www.ccsd.edu/parents.cfm>.

Health Services:

District Health Services; Web Site: <http://www.ccsd.edu/Page/1233>



School Attendance

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, including homeroom and study periods. Regular school attendance is the responsibility of the student and the parent/guardian. If a student is absent, parents are requested to call the school nurse to report this absence. If a call is not received, the nurse will contact the family. **Parents should send in a note with their child upon returning to school.** If a student is absent for ten days, the family will receive a letter from the principal which will inquire about the reasons for the absences and a plan for improving attendance.

Illness

The school nurse should be called any day your child will be absent. Please call 639-6480 ext. 4104. Students should come to school healthy and ready to learn. If your child has a communicable disease or a lengthy absence, please notify the school. When your health provider prescribes antibiotics, for any medical condition, your child must have a full 24 hours of medication before returning to school. Students must be fever free for 24 hours without taking medication for fevers.

Crutches – as of September 2011, any student who is in use of crutches must have a crutch form filled out by a doctor. Students will not be permitted to stay in school without the crutch form on file.

<http://www.ccsd.edu/cms/lib011/NY01913832/Centricity/Domain/759/healthservicescrutchpermissionform.pdf>

Any changes in your child's medical condition should be reported to the nurse. Any medical form may be obtained through the CCSD Web site.

Allergies

Please inform the school nurse if your child has any allergies to medications or food, or if he or she has environmental allergies, so that special precautions may be taken. Many times students have classmates with food allergies: some of these may even be life threatening. We will take every necessary precaution to ensure the health of all of our students.

If your child requires the use of an Epi Pen for allergies or a life threatening situation please have your physician complete an allergy action plan. Allergy action plans can be accessed on ccsd.edu website. Then go to Medical/Sports form to Food allergy Action Plan.
<http://www.ccsd.edu/files/filesystem/FoodAllergyActionPlan.pdf>

Other students may have dietary restrictions or may be allergic to certain foods. The district does offer gluten free foods. If needed, you can contact Robert Preiss, Director of Food Services at 639-6546.
<http://www.ccsd.edu/files/filesystem/FoodAllergyActionPlan.pdf>

Immunizations

School immunization rules and regulations have been changed so that New York State immunization requirements are consistent with the most current childhood and adolescent immunization recommendations made by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). ACIP is a group of medical and public health experts that develop recommendations on how to use vaccines to control diseases in the United States. These recommendations can be found by following the link below.

<https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2370.pdf>

Vision and Hearing

Each student in the elementary school is given vision and hearing screenings every year. If a condition is found as a result of the vision and hearing screening, the school nurse will contact the family to request a follow-up by a physician.



Physical and Dental Examinations

Each student entering the Clarkstown Central School District for the first time must have a physical and dental examination upon entrance to school. Forms should be returned to the school nurse no later than October 1st, or one month after entrance to school (for children not entering in September). In addition, students entering Kindergarten, 2nd, 4th, 7th and 10th grades require physical and dental exams. If the forms are not returned to school as directed, a health appraisal will be performed by the school physician. Parents/guardians will be notified of any health problems detected in school. In addition, students who are due for triennial evaluations need a physical examination completed within the last twelve months.

<http://www.ccsd.edu/files/filesystem/AnnualPhysicalExamK-12.pdf>

<http://www.ccsd.edu/files/filesystem/HealthServices-DentalForm.pdf>

Medications in School

Only the school nurse may administer medications in school. A written request from the parent and a written order from the family physician must be submitted along with the medication in its original container to the school nurse. This includes both prescription and nonprescription medications. Students may have self-carry medications like inhalers and epipens, but only with a prescription and permission from the nurse. Please inform the nurse of any changes in your child's medication or health status so that health records remain up to date and provide the best care for your child.

Students are not permitted to keep prescription medications (ie. Tylenol, advil, etc.) on them during the school day. They are also prohibited from giving any medications to another student. Such action will result in a disciplinary consequence.

<http://www.ccsd.edu/files/filesystem/MedicationRequest.pdf>

District Policies:

Emergency Drills / Emergency Response Team

Evacuation drills, including fire drills, are conducted on a regular basis throughout the year. Our faculty and staff are trained to assist their classes to exit the building in a quick and orderly fashion. Students should follow the directions of their teacher at all times during these drills, leaving their classrooms silently and proceeding as directed by the teacher. An emergency procedure notice is posted in each room detailing instructions for the safest and quickest evacuation route. New state regulations now require twelve drills be conducted each school year, four of which must be lock-down drills, the remaining eight are required to be evacuation drills.

Drug Policy

Drug abuse has been a growing concern of students, educators and parents. Since young adulthood is a period of time often marked by conflict and stress, students tend to seek a "false" sense of security or peer acceptance by involving themselves with drugs and/or alcohol. Schools have an obligation to educate our students and prevent the use and abuse of these substances.

Possession or suspected use of drug and/or alcohol in school, or suspicion of being "under the influence" upon arrival to school, is cause for immediate suspension. Before the student is permitted to return to school, a parent conference is necessary. Additional steps which may be taken include: contacting the police, recommendation for drug testing, recommendation for a drug rehabilitation program, or termination from the Birchwood program.

Suspension Policy

School rules are established to ensure the health, safety and educational needs of the students. When these rules are broken, the school will enforce an appropriate consequence.

The foremost rationales for in-school suspension are:

1. The student requires a strong intervention for reflection on his/her behaviors and the consequences.
2. The student needs to be separated from peers and social activities at school.
3. The rights of other students to an education need to be safeguarded.

In-school suspension will be assigned in most instances unless there are significant reasons that require a student to be sent home. Each situation is carefully reviewed by the principal and staff members in order to reach a decision that is in the student's best interest. Ultimately, the principal makes the final decision for all cases involving suspension.

Students are subject to at-home suspensions for the following situations:

- Physical assault on another student or staff member
 - Conduct of such nature as to constitute a danger to the physical well-being of others
 - Being under the influence of an illegal substance
 - Willfully causing, or attempting to cause, damage to school property
 - Leaving school grounds
 - Ongoing disruptive behavior that is detrimental to the student, class or educational environment
- Students who are suspended from school will be required to complete any tests or assignments missed as a result of their suspension. Parents are required to accompany their child to school for a meeting with the principal before he/she can return to classes.

Clarkstown Policy on Discrimination

Clarkstown Central School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender orientation, disability or age in employment or its educational programs in accordance with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1973; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990; or the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability and age, respectively.

If you have questions regarding the district's responsibilities under these regulations, wish to make a complaint, or require services related to a disability, please contact: Mr. Jeff Sobel at (845) 639-5616 on Title IX, which prohibits discrimination, based on sex, and for the Age Discrimination Act, which prohibits discrimination based on age; and Ms. Lynn Rafalik at (845) 639-6482 on Section 504 and on the ADA, which prohibit discrimination based on disability.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Sexual harassment is described as unwelcome sexual advances which affect an individual's employment. It also includes harassment from one student to another. The Clarkstown Central School District has developed a standard sexual harassment policy for all schools within the district. It states that sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. It also outlines the procedure to follow if one feels he or she is being harassed. Reports of sexual harassment should be brought to the attention of the building principal immediately. Copies of the district's sexual harassment policy are available in the Birchwood office.

Dignity for All Students Task Force

On January 27, 2011, over 70 Clarkstown community and school members convened to create the district's Dignity for All Task Force to address New York State's anti-bullying legislation. The task force is facilitated by Felix Festa's Principal Kevin Horan and initially consisted of three subcommittees: Programs (Dr. Howard Mandel, facilitator), Accountability (Mrs. Amy Franchi, facilitator) and Cyberbullying (Mrs. Debra Tarantino, facilitator). Following the adoption of the Dignity for All Policy by the Board of Education in June, 2011, the Taskforce evolved into the Implementation Subcommittee and the Compliance and Accountability Subcommittee and met again in October 2011 to continue our goals of proactively addressing this law and policy in order to assure all students, staff, and visitors in our school system are treated respectfully.

Internet Usage District Code of Conduct

In this day and age, where electronic communication is part of almost everyone's daily life, the issues of social networking outside of school carry over into school and can have a disrupting effect on the educational process and social and emotional well-being of our students. It is important that all students and their families have a clear understanding of the district's policy regarding this issue.

Please see the section in the district's Code of Conduct (Section VI. Prohibited Student Conduct) below which outlines the district's expectations.

<http://www.ccsd.edu/files/filesystem/5410codeofconduct-2.pdf>

Students may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension from school when they:

1. Engage in conduct that is disorderly. Examples of disorderly conduct include:
 - Computer/electronic communications misuse, including any unauthorized use of computers, software, or internet/intranet account; accessing inappropriate websites; or any other violation of the district's acceptable use policy. **Computer/electronic communications misuse off campus includes using such means of communication to threaten, harass, or annoy school personnel and/or other students; sending "hate mail" or creating messages or documents of a threatening or inflammatory nature.**
 - Taking photos or videos of students and/or staff is expressly prohibited, on school grounds and the bus and will result in disciplinary consequences.

District Student Dress Code

The following are guidelines for appropriate dress for school and school functions, which may vary according to the nature of the function or event. Students and their parents have the primary responsibility for acceptable student dress and appearance. Teachers and all other district personnel should exemplify and reinforce acceptable student dress and help students develop an understanding of appropriate appearance in the school setting by complying with these guidelines.

<http://www.ccsd.edu/files/filesystem/5410codeofconduct-2.pdf>

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

"The Board of Education affirms its goal of providing a safe and economical transportation system for district students. Transportation shall be provided at district expense to those students who are eligible as authorized by the Board.

Students with disabilities shall receive transportation up to fifty miles from their homes when recommended by the Committee on Special Education as necessary. Distances greater than fifty miles must be approved by the State Education Department.

Students participating in programs held in other than their home schools during the school day shall be eligible for transportation to and from the programs and the school they usually attend by school bus."

District's Code of Conduct

The Clarkstown Central School District endeavors to provide the highest quality education to its students. In furtherance of its mission, the District is committed to ensuring that the educational environment in each of its schools is conducive to the educational process.

Of utmost concern is protecting the safety and welfare of students, teachers, and all other members of the community on school property. To this end, and in compliance with State mandates, the District has established a distinct and formal set of rules and expectations governing the conduct of those on school property, including school buses, and attending school functions. Furthermore, embodied in the rules and expectations must be well-defined penalties and consequences for unacceptable conduct which must be administered promptly and fairly.

Summary

We hope that this handbook provides you with helpful information concerning all aspects of the Birchwood School. The rules and policies are designed to foster an environment of mutual respect that will enable us to meet the individual needs of our students. Our goal is to motivate and enable them to reach their full potential as productive, ethical members of the community.

Students or parents who have questions concerning any of the rules or policies covered in this handbook may discuss them with their child's homeroom teacher, therapist or the principal.