



**Birchwood**  
Community High School

**REVISION  
ADVICE  
MINDFULNESS  
PHYSICAL  
WELLBEING  
SUPPORT  
WE ACHIEVE  
TOGETHER**

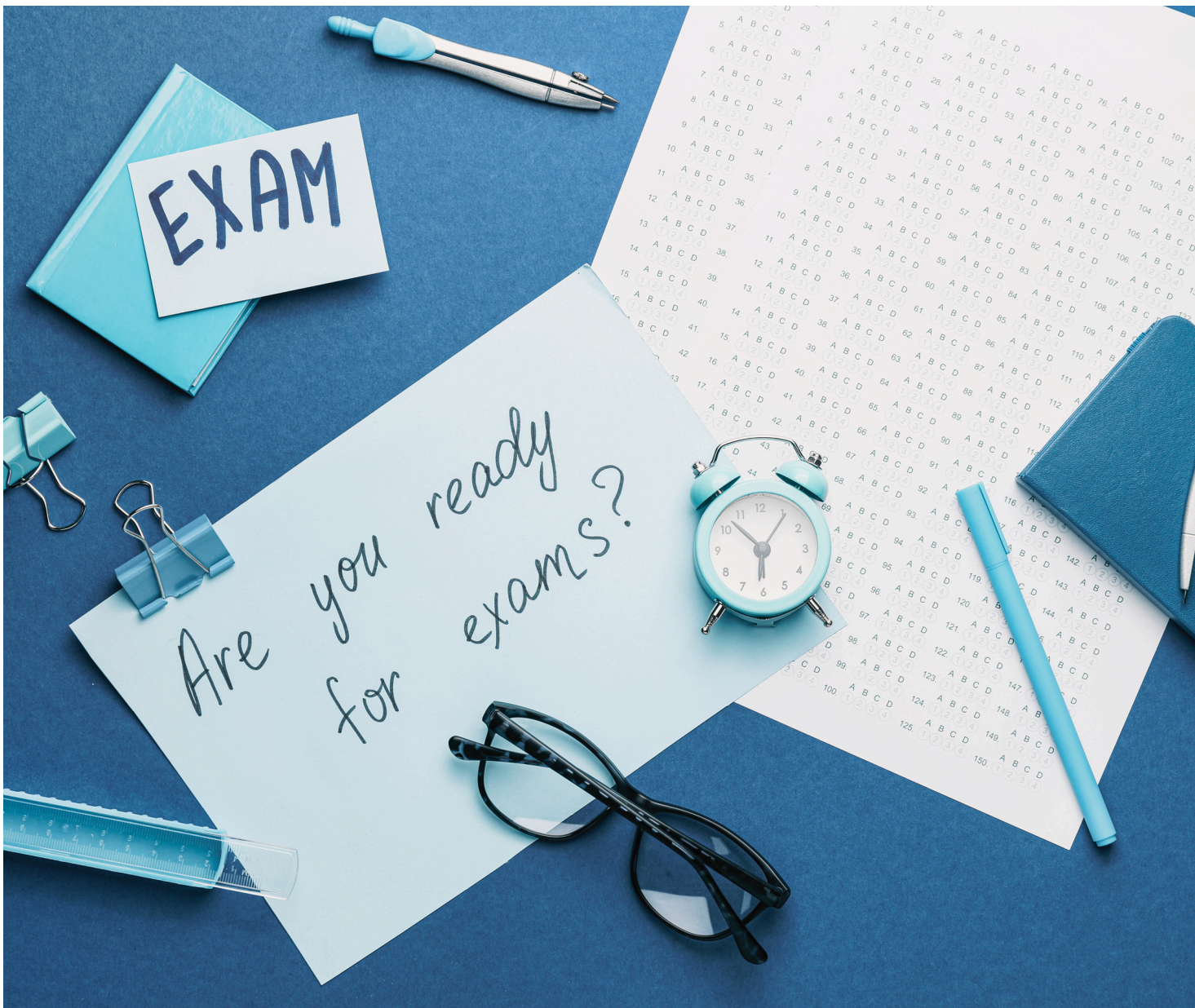
Wellbeing during exam season

**“Above all it’s important to keep a sense of perspective, look after yourself and each other and have a strong sense of belief in what you can achieve if you put your mind and effort to it”**

Along with the start of the warmer weather, the summer term means exam season for our exam students at Birchwood.

We encourage all students to fulfil their potential in exams by preparing properly and trying their best, whilst also emphasising the importance of looking after their physical and mental wellbeing and maintaining balance in their daily activities.

This information has been put together to provide a physical, psychological and social toolkit for students to help them stay healthy and happy this term, reduce stress and perform to the best of their ability in their exams.

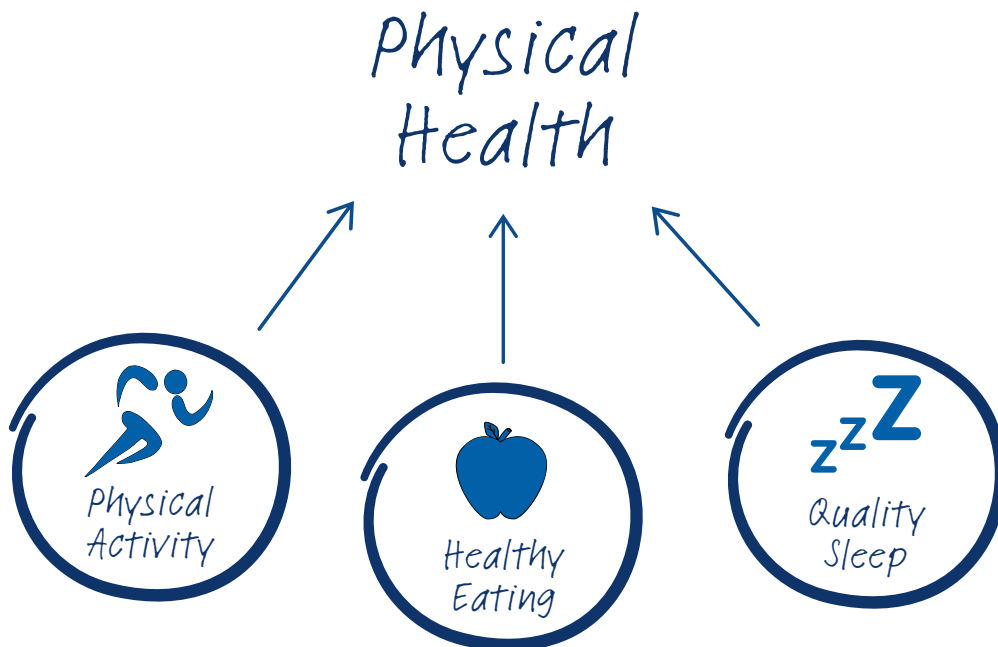


# PHYSICAL WELLBEING

**1. Sleep** is crucial for wellbeing, focus and energy. Try to aim for around eight hours of sleep a night and increase your chances of achieving this by avoiding study, emails and screens after 10pm. It's also advisable to have your last caffeinated drink well before 8pm. If you have trouble sleeping, try deep-breathing and relaxation techniques, like breathing in for 7 and out for 11, or download one of the many relaxation apps available such as [Pzizz](#), or [Headspace](#). [The Royal College of Psychiatrists](#) has some great sleep advice too.

**2. Mindfulness and stillness.**

To think more clearly, retain information and get the creative juices flowing, the brain needs to be relaxed and calm. Mindfulness practice can help to achieve this, as well as providing techniques for remaining calm in stressful situations, like an exam. Feel your feet connected to the ground and draw your attention to the sensation of breathing, counting your breath in cycles of 10 and gently refocusing if your mind wanders (which it will). Just 10 minutes of mindful breathing before revision can have a dramatic effect on how well you learn.



**3. Exercise.** Aim to get at least 40 minutes of exercise every other day, ideally out in the fresh air in broad daylight. Go for a walk or a run, go swimming, play touch rugby, football or a game of rounders. If you play for a team, keep it up for the social element as well as the health benefits. Physical movement boosts your ability to learn, makes you feel good and reduces anxiety so don't let it drop to the bottom of your priority list. You'll be surprised by how much it benefits your revision.

**4. Diet** affects mood and energy levels so make sure yours is helping not hindering you. Eat three healthy meals a day, including a good breakfast, and avoid fatty, sugary junk food. Try to aim for 5 portions or more of fresh fruit and veg every day with a mixture of slow and quick release carbs to balance your energy levels, especially on exam days. Avoid alcohol and too much caffeine.



**5. Believe in yourself.** Never stop believing in your own immense capability. If you put your mind to the task of succeeding in your exams and visualise yourself doing it, then you can do it. We know that our bright, brilliant pupils can achieve what they set out to do.

**6. Think about thinking.** Notice your 'self-talk' – the things you say to yourself as you prepare for and go into exams. Identify and challenge any self-sabotaging thoughts that are unhelpful such as 'I'm going to fail' or 'I don't understand this'. Instead, try to proactively develop self-talk that is optimistic, encouraging and on your side. Think about finding solutions to the challenges you face and always reach out for help if you need it.

# PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

**7. 50-minute study sessions.** Avoid working for more than 50 minutes in any one hour, unless you get into a deep state of flow (see number 9). Break your revision sessions up with something to relax the mind like going for a walk, practising scales on an instrument, doing some yoga, playing with a yo-yo or just watching something funny on YouTube.

**8. Vary, Repeat and Build.** When it comes to exam prep, start simple and build up to more complicated topics with hard work. If you begin with things you know you can achieve, this builds confidence which is a crucial ingredient for exam success. Acknowledge and celebrate your own progress by making a list of topics you are going to revise and ticking them off when complete. Repeat things to strengthen the networks of learning in the brain but if you get really frustrated with something, walk away, do something else and return to it later. Break up your revision into manageable chunks and don't spend too long on one subject.

**9. Flow.** Do something every day that you can lose yourself in for a while. 'Flow' is where your ability and the challenge are perfectly matched, you become completely absorbed in what you're doing and lose track of time. This might be revision itself and if you find this is the case when studying, don't stop. Other activities that can put you in a state of flow include drawing, playing a musical instrument, dancing or getting absorbed in a good book. If you start to feel bored with what you're doing, up the challenge.

# SOCIAL WELLBEING

**10. Support.** You're part of a community so remember to reach out to others for help, and offer help to other people. One of the best ways to learn something is to teach it to someone else so try working in small revision groups where you can test, correct and support each other. Remember that the only competition in exams is with yourself so never feel like you're up against your friends and always respect each other's right to work.

**11. Socialise.** It's important to keep in regular contact with your friends during exam season for encouragement and motivation as well as to blow off steam and have a laugh. Make time to talk about things that have nothing to do with exams as well as sharing your successes and set-backs.



*We wish every pupil who  
is sitting exams at  
Birchwood this term,  
the very best of luck!*

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