



Birches First School

Believe, Grow, Succeed ...
...to be the best 'me' I can be.

September 2022

Issue: 1

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British Value: Individual Liberty

Birches Value: Belief & Independence

Dear Parents...

A very warm welcome back to school!

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday! I trust that this letter finds you and your family safe and well and ready for a busy and exciting term ahead. A special welcome to our new children and parents to our amazing school. In addition, we have new staff joining the Birches Team, Mrs Buckley our Reception Teacher, Mrs Petrylak teaching Y2 Mondays and Tuesdays, Mrs Hill teaching Year 4 and Mr Hallmark our new Teaching Assistant in Early Years. I am sure you all will be very happy here. I would like to inform any new parents that we strive to keep you fully up to date and involved with school business. If there is anything you feel you would like further clarification on, please do not hesitate to ask, no question is too big or too small!

During the holidays much has happened...our Library has had a wonderful piece of artwork created, I cannot wait to see the children's faces when they see it. A HUGE thank you to the very talented Mrs Norris-Jones for all her hard work in the holiday. A sensory space has been created in the Quiet Room for children to access if they need to and Mrs Burkitt and Miss Hulme have worked incredibly hard in our outdoor area in readiness for Forest Schools to begin-the area looks AMAZING! We are delighted that Mrs Burkitt is taking on the Forest School Role and will be a fully qualified Forest School Leader by the end of the Autumn Term! I know the children will thoroughly enjoy their Forest School sessions with her. New carpet has been laid throughout the corridors and the school has been thoroughly cleaned by Mrs Ash and Mrs McLeod and all teachers have worked incredibly hard in their classrooms making a wonderful, purposeful environment with inviting Reading Areas.

We at Birches First School will continue to support our children in our care both educationally and emotionally, their wellbeing is our highest priority. If there is anything that may have happened during the school holiday to impact your child/family, please let us know and we will do everything we possibly can to support you.

We are all looking forward to seeing the school full, happy and busy again...

I wish you luck with your own re-establishment of normal bedtime and getting up routines...I know it will be a huge shock to the system in our home tomorrow morning!

I also wish to reassure you and your children that a few nerves will be whistling around every home tonight, but we will do our very best to make everyone feel welcome and safe when the staff and I greet the children in the morning (Reception and Nursery on their specified days).

Sleep well.

Best wishes from Miss Varricchione & the Birches Team

September Information...

Please note the following times for September:

Nursery 8.30am-11.30am (11.30-12.00pm lunch) 12.00pm-3.00pm

Reception 8.30-8.40am- 3.05pm

Year 1/2/3/4 8.30-8.40am-3.10pm

Pupil Information

Please do contact the school office if any of your circumstances have changed over the holidays so we have the most up to date information for your child/ren i.e.. Any medical conditions, dietary needs, change of address, phone number etc.

Medication/Inhalers

Please remember to bring all prescribed medication and inhalers to the office on the first day back

School Bags

Please a reminder NO large Bags-Book Bags ONLY, we have a child in a wheelchair and must ensure paths are clear at all times. I hope you understand this is most necessary for compliance for Risk/Fire Assessments.

Pencil cases

Children are not required to bring pencil cases into school anymore, we have all the stationery and equipment that the children need.

Homework

After much discussion and listening to parents' comments we have decided not to continue the Homework Grids. During your 'Year Ahead' Meeting Teachers will explain the Weekly Home Learning expectations such as Reading, TTRockstars, Spellings, Numbots etc. and how we can support you to work with your child at home. Teachers will also be setting one piece of Homework during the half term, and this will be to support the wider curriculum and showcase days shared via Marvellous Me.

What is my Child Learning?

Your child's Curriculum Topic Web will be uploaded to the school website by Monday 12th September. The class teachers are really excited about the learning experience they have planned and hope you will continue to support your child as much as possible.

14th September School Photographs

David will be offering the opportunity for family photos this year before school as it currently stands. In addition, children will all have their individual photograph taken and a sibling photograph if applicable.

Grandparents Day 30th September

Details will follow in a separate letter for each class inviting Grandparents into school.

Macmillan Coffee Morning 29th September

We will be hosting a Macmillan Coffee Morning on Thursday, 29th September 2022 from 8:30am to 10:30am. Annual coffee mornings across the country have been highly effective in making sure that nobody faces cancer alone and Birches would like to continue to embrace this wonderful project, welcoming parents to catch up over a cup of coffee/tea, enjoy some scrumptious treats and donate the cost of the cuppa to Macmillan Cancer Research!

By joining Macmillan's biggest fundraising event, we will be collecting funds to provide medical, emotional, practical and financial support for people facing cancer, as well as campaigning for better cancer care. There are now 2.5 million people in the UK living with cancer. It would be wonderful if you could come along to this fantastic event and even bring along other family and friends to sponsor the cause. The entrance cost, inclusive of tea/ coffee and cake, will be £2 per person.

All cake/ cupcakes/ biscuits contributions and monetary donations are greatly appreciated. All funds raised will all be sent to Macmillan. If you are unable to attend the coffee morning and would still like to donate, please send in any donation to school with your child in a sealed envelope, labelled 'Macmillan donation'.

Many thanks for your support and we look forward to enjoying a cup of coffee (and cake!!!) with you!

Phonic Workshop-Thursday 29th September

Phonics Workshop for parents of children in YR and Y1 will take place on Thursday 29th September at 5.45pm.

We encourage all parents to attend to help support your child with the learning and application of phonics at home and become familiar with the approved systematic synthetic phonic scheme we follow-'Little Wandle'.

Extra-Curricular/After School Clubs

We are delighted to be offering the following until October Half Term:-

Monday- Football Club Y3 and Y4 3.10-4.00pm

Tuesday KS1 Club 3.05-4.15pm

Thursday KS2 Club 3.10-4.10pm

Letter will follow which will include information and Survey.

Parking

A reminder to **please** park considerately in the roads around the school.

Last year I received many complaints from parents and residents regarding inconsiderate and sometimes illegal and/or dangerous parking. Cars should not park on the yellow zigzag lines outside school, on the junction of Birches Avenue and Birches Road, block driveways, double park along Birches Avenue or use the school drive to turn.

We appreciate the support of all our parents in keeping all road users safe and maintaining positive relationships with our residents.

Thank you.

Pupil Premium/School Lunches

All children in Reception and KS1 (Year 1 and Year 2) are entitled to Free School Meals. However, it is important that families who previously qualified for Free School Meals still apply as school receives additional funding for your child which will benefit your child in school. Please can we encourage any parents who are new to Birches and are in receipt of the following benefits to apply. The criteria for qualifying would be to be in receipt of one of the following:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance. Please note the 'new style' job seekers allowance is not a qualifying benefit, as this is based upon payment of National Insurance contributions and not the household income
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance. Please note the 'new style' employment and support allowance is not a qualifying benefit, as this is based upon payment of National Insurance contributions and not the household income
- eligible for Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit and the household income (as used by HMRC to assess tax credits) is not more than £16,190. Please note: anyone eligible for Working Tax Credit, or if you have a partner and they receive it, regardless of Income, you will not qualify
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- In receipt of the 4-week run on of working tax credit (this is where someone becomes unemployed or reduces their hours and so is no longer entitled to working tax credit but will continue to receive it for a further 4 weeks and is entitled to free meals during that time)
- Universal credit (provided you have an annual net earned household income of no more than £7,400 as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods). Your net earned income is your household income after taxes and deductions and does not include income from Universal Credit or any other benefits you may receive.

For more information visit <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Educational-awards-benefits/FreeSchoolMeals/Apply-online.aspx>

Early Years Pupil Premium (Nursery)

Parents in receipt of the above benefits are also eligible to apply for additional funding to support their child in Early Years. For an application form please contact the school office.

Service Pupil Premium (SPP)

Schools which have children of service families from years Reception to Year 11 can receive the SPP funding. It is designed to assist the school in providing the additional support that these children may need and is currently worth £310 per service child who meets the eligibility criteria. Please advise the school office if you are new to school and meet this SPP criteria.

Roald Dahl Day-Monday 12th September

We will be dedicating a whole day to the magnificent author in school. Children will be grouped into their houses and work together moving around each class completing a different Roald Dahl Activity with class teachers.

Children will **not** need to dress up on this day. We are hosting it a day earlier due to games sessions on Tuesdays.

A letter will be sent in due course from Mrs Kandola our English Lead.

Jeans for Genes Day Friday 23rd September

The Jeans for Genes campaign raises awareness of the daily challenges faced by those living with a genetic condition and raises money to fund projects that make a tangible difference to the lives of those affected.

We are inviting all children to wear any type of denim bottoms (jeans/skirt) with their Birches School T-Shirt and Jumper/Cardigan on Friday 23rd September.

Trainers are allowed to be worn on this day.

A £1 donation will be collected via ParentPay for your child to participate in this event.

Marvellous Me

At Birches, following parental comments we have been thinking of ways to share your children's successes in school and allow you, as parents, to be fully informed of all the wonderful achievements your child has made on a regular basis.

Therefore, we are delighted to announce the launch of Marvellous Me. Marvellous Me is a free app which allows for personalised, instant and positive communication between home and school in a safe and secure way and will inform you of any brilliant moments your child has achieved at Birches.

A letter will be sent this week with all the information regarding setting this up.

Staff are being trained how to use the software during our INSET session and we will be able to fully assist and support you if any challenges arise.

You can find out more at www.marvellousme.com. We think you will love it!

PFA-Monday 19th September 6pm-7pm

As school we depend heavily on money raised by events to provide extra resources, we just couldn't possibly fund for our children to enjoy and benefit from. If you have any spare time and would like to join the PFA please come to the office for a chat and sign up. Every little bit helps and what we do is solely for the children to have fun! Please join us for the next meeting in the Staffroom Monday 19th September. I look forward to welcoming you all.

Our Summer Fayre raised £2672.64, a huge thank you to all that attended and a huge thank you to all the PFA and volunteers for giving up their time (and weekend) to enable the event to take place.

Birches School Local Academy Board (LAB)Governors

Governor details are posted on the school website www.birches.staffs.sch.uk

Mrs Karen Lawley is our LAB Leader, you may contact her via: - governors@birches.staffs.sch.uk

Penalty Notices for Absences from School

In accordance with Government legislation a request for leave can only be authorised if it is deemed to be an "exceptional circumstance". Where a request is not deemed to be an "exceptional circumstance" a child's non-attendance for this period will be marked as an unauthorised absence. This absence will be retained on record throughout their time at school.

If a child has ten days or more unauthorised absence over two half terms in a row, a penalty notice may be issued to parents/carers of that child. Late marks will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, and these will also be taken into account when issuing Penalty Notices.

Attendance is monitored regularly by the Education Welfare Officer based at Staffordshire County Council. On-line spot register checks can be carried out without prior consultation with school and may lead to further investigation by the Education Welfare team.

School Uniform

Children at Birches wear their uniform with pride. Our school colours are red, grey and white. Please ensure that all items of clothing are clearly named to make the task of reuniting any clothing with its owner easier. Names written using ball point pen will need to be checked regularly to ensure the name is still legible. The dress code for winter is red logoed embroidered round-neck sweatshirt or cardigan. White logoed embroidered polo (preferred) white T-shirt. White or grey socks/red or grey tights. Grey skirts or pinafore dresses, smart trousers for girls and boys.

Footwear

For health and safety reasons well-fitting flat shoes are essential for school wear. Sensible black shoes - not trainers or trainer style. Trainers should be worn for Games only. If you are sending your child with laced trainers please ensure they can tie them independently. Sandals with heels and sling backs are inappropriate and should not be worn.

Waterproofs

It is essential that children have rainwear in school. With many children arriving by car we often find that at damp playtimes children are not equipped to go out to play. The weather can change during the day and we do expect children to go out for fresh air and exercise at playtime if the rain is light.

Jewellery and Nail Varnish

We request that children do not wear any jewellery in school. Children with pierced ears should wear small, flat studs. No jewellery is worn during physical activity lessons and these should be removed when participating in sporting activities. Nail varnish should be removed for school. Make up, hair gel, tramlines and highlights are inappropriate for school and should not be worn unless children are attending the school disco.

Sports Kit

PE: This should be brought to school EVERY MONDAY and will be sent home on a Friday to be washed and returned. Red Shorts, white logoed embroidered T-shirt **NO BLACK PUMPS**. **Games:** White/Black Trainers, white logoed embroidered T-shirt, black jogging bottoms (no logos or brand names) and red zipped logoed embroidered hooded jumper. Lightweight waterproof. **Please note-on Games Day children are to come to school in their Games Uniform.**

Remember your child needs to bring an EMPTY water bottle to school everyday to keep hydrated!

If you are uncertain, please see the prospectus on our website which illustrates our uniform expectations. <http://www.birches.staffs.sch.uk/prospectus/>

Parent Information

Please see below for information Safeguarding and School Policies and Practices. If anyone requires a paper copy please contact the School Office and we will happily assist you.

Safeguarding Leads

At Birches First School the safety of our children is of upmost importance. It is everyone's responsibility to safeguard our children but speak to one of the people below if you have concerns.



Miss Varricchione
Headteacher
Designated Safeguarding Lead



Miss Hulme
Year 2 Teacher/
Assistant Headteacher
Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Lloyd
Nursery Teacher
Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Banks
Club Manager/ Year 3 TA
Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead

I will be sending links to signpost parents to our Safeguarding Policy and other relevant policies in due course over the next week.

May I remind parents that our school is a **Mobile Free Zone**, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. Please ensure that all phones are kept in bags/pockets whilst on school premises -Thank you!

Attendance

We are very proud of our attendance and punctuality at Birches, this year we will be reintroducing our Attendance Certificates and Letters hoping to raise our attendance to 97%.

Please be aware if your child's attendance is between **93 -96.99%** this means it has dropped below the DfE National Target for school of 97%. A letter will be sent to you to inform you of your child's attendance rate for the monitored period (termly). Following the letter we will continue to monitor your child's attendance and work with you help in anyway we can.

Dates for the Diary

5th September	School Closed – Staff Training
6th September	Welcome back- Flexi Drop Off 8.30-8.40am Only Reception/Nursery Parents on Playground Please at Drop Off
8th September	Meet the Teacher- The Year Ahead Meeting Y1- 3.30pm Y2- 4.00pm Y3-4.30pm Y4-5.00pm
12th September	Roald Dahl Day In School Activities in Houses- Carousel around each Class
14th September	Individual and Sibling Photographs
23rd September	Jeans for Genes Day
29th September	Phonic Workshop for Reception/Year One Parents
29th September	MacMillion Coffee Morning School Hall (from Drop Off 8.30am-10.30am)
30th September	Grandparents' Day
October	Black History Month
3-9th	Dyslexia Awareness Week
11th	Parent Interviews YR-Y4 3.30-5.30pm
13th	Parent Interviews YR-Y4 6.00-8.00pm Parent Interviews Nursery 4.00-6.00pm

Academic Year 2022- 2023

Please note the following Inset Days for your diaries:-

Monday 5th September 2022

Monday 31st October 2022

Friday 17th February 2023

Friday 28th April 2023

Monday 5th June 2023

Autumn Term 2022

Inset day: Monday 5th September

Term starts: Tuesday 6th September

Holiday: Monday 24th October – Friday 28th October

Term ends: Friday 16th December

Holiday: Monday 19th December – Monday 2nd January

Spring Term 2023

Term starts: Tuesday 3rd January

Holiday: Monday 20th February – Friday 24th February

Term ends: Friday 31st March

Holiday: Monday 3rd April – Friday 14th April

Summer Term 2023

Term starts: Monday 17th April

May Day: Monday 1st May

Holiday: Monday 29th May – Friday 2nd June

Term ends: Tuesday 25th July

Holiday: Wednesday 26th July – Friday 1st September

Autumn Term 2023

Inset day: Monday 4th September

Term starts: Tuesday 5th September

Birches Values:

Belief **I**ndependence **R**esilience **C**uriosity **H**onesty **E**nthusiasm **S**uccess

Our Mission Statement:

Believe, Grow, Succeed...to be the best 'me' I can be.