



Birches First School

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

September 2023

Issue: 1

office@birches.staffs.sch.uk

01902 297910

British Value: *Individual Liberty*

Birches Value: *Success & Independence*

Dear Parents...

A very warm welcome back to school!

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday and enjoyed spurring our amazing lionesses on! We did get some sunshine eventually after all that rain and as usual the weather looks great for the return to school!

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, Miss Ayling teaching in Year 4, Mrs Davis, teaching Y2 Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and Miss Fisher our new support in Year 2. 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, I am always at the gate both morning and afternoon for a 'quick' question/query or even a chat!

During the holidays so much again has happened...Y3 has successfully 'moved' into the mobile, all teachers and teaching assistants have worked incredibly hard in their classrooms making a wonderful, purposeful environment with inviting Reading Areas. It amazes me how they become transformed every year!

On the last Thursday of the school term, I had a full day of a Health and Safety Audit/Inspection from our Local Authority Staffordshire County Council and have been informed that we have retained our **Level 5** (the highest level you can be awarded!). I am truly delighted to receive this amazing news and report. It showcases all the hard work that all the staff do daily to ensure and provide the upmost safety for staff, visitors and most importantly our precious children. It was a full day assessment and audit on all our electrical, fire and water checks followed by a scrutinisation and ratification of Birches' policies and practices concentrating on all Risk Assessments, First Aid, Manual Handling, COSHH, Staff Training, Wellbeing etc. Also, a huge thank you to you as parents for helping us to implement all the Health and Safety Policies and again the amazing staff here at Birches for applying policies and having a positive Health and Safety culture at school working together to keep everyone happy, healthy and safe. **FANTASTIC NEWS!**

If the last week wasn't busy enough, Miss Hulme had a visit from Chris Woods (Staffordshire School Games Leader) to provide evidence and case studies to demonstrate that Birches meets all the criteria to be awarded **The School Games Platinum Award**. I

can now officially say we have been awarded the prestigious award and thank Miss Hulme for her hard work and guidance leading PE/Games so successfully across the school ensuring all children access their full entitlement. Such wonderful news to start the new year with! I am so proud of everyone at Birches and how hard everyone works to make the school such a successful one.

Finally, you may have heard...as Birches is part of Codsall Multi Academy Trust (St.



Nicholas and Codsall Middle School) we have a dog!

Ted will be based at Codsall Middle School with his owner Mrs. Connolly. Mrs. Connolly is the CMAT SENDCo (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator) across the MAT and will over the next academic year be spending allocated time at Birches to complete her role and therefore, at times Ted will be accompanying her into school.

Mrs Connolly has completed a Risk Assessment for Ted and I will be sending further information separately to you all to read regarding Ted and his role in school, she has passed on this initial message 'we are very early in the journey of having a school dog and therefore we are willing to listen and respond to any concerns you may have please do feel free to email me and I will happily make contact to discuss things further'. Mrs Connolly can be emailed at:- senco@cmat.academy

I am sure you will all welcome both Mrs Connolly and Ted to the school!

We at Birches First School, 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. See you in the morning!

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 8.30am-8.40am- 3.05pm

Year 1 and Year 2 8.30am-8.40am-3.10pm

Year 3 and Year 4 8.30am-8.40am-3.15pm

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 so we can implement them straight away.

School Bags

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

Homework

After much discussion and listening to parents' comments we have decided to reintroduce a homework book with Maths/English work to be completed at home. 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 via Marvellous Me. Teachers will set individual days for returning homework and spelling tests.

What is my Child Learning?

Your child's Curriculum Topic Web will be uploaded to the school website by Monday 11th 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.

20th September School Photographs

David will be offering the opportunity for family photos this year before school at 8am as it currently stands. In addition, children will all have their individual photograph taken and a sibling photograph if applicable.

Grandparents Day 2nd October

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 Friday, 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!

Extra-Curricular/After School Clubs

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

Monday Football Club (Y3 and Y4) 3.15-4.00pm

Tuesday Forest School Club (Y3 and Y4) 3.15-4.00pm

Wednesday Multi Sports Club (Y1 and Y2) 3.10-4.00pm

Thursday Football Club (Y1 and Y2) 3.10-4.00pm

A Survey was sent out in July for uptake and confirmation/ allocation texts were also sent in July. Please call the office if you need to check any details.

Clubs will change on a half term basis to offer variation and ensure all children have equal opportunities to extra-curricular activities.

All Clubs will be delivered by Mrs Burkitt our Games/PE Leader.

Parking – A brand new start!

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.

Some families may be eligible to apply for Pupil Premium funding to provide additional funding for your child at Birches which is used to benefit your child in school.

Please can we encourage any parents who are in receipt of the following benefits to apply (particularly those parents of children who previously qualified for Free School Meals and new parents). 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 £335 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-Thursday 14th September

We will be dedicating a whole day to the magnificent author in school. Children will be grouped into their houses (Elm, Maple, Ash and Oak) 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 later due to games sessions on Wednesdays for some classes.

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

Jeans for Genes Day Friday 22nd 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 22nd 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 on **Monday 18th September.**

Marvellous Me



We are delighted to announce that we will be retaining Marvellous Me for another year. 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 for our new parents to the school.

You can find out more at www.marvellousme.com.

If there is anything we at school can do more or assist with your activation, please contact the school office and we will be happy to help.

PFA-Meeting to be confirmed

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 I look forward to welcoming you all.

Our Summer Fayre raised a very generous amount...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.

During our AGM Meeting will be discussing how the money can be used to support our children across the school.

School Council

Please remember if your child wishes to be 'voted' to be their school class representatives they have until Wednesday 13th September to put together a little something- talk, poster, poem anything they feel confident with talking to their class. The class then following our British Value of Democracy all has their individual vote and the winning children will be announced during Celebration Assembly on Friday 15th September.

Please note if your child has been a School Councillor they are unable to re-apply until Y4.

Again, I am very much looking forward to working the School Council, our children have such fantastic views and opinions!

Good Luck to all.

School Fund £1/Glue Sticks

As you are fully aware schools nationally are struggling with increased costs.

We are asking all families if they would be able to contribute via ParentPay (£1 per week) to assist with school purchasing resources and providing additional activities. If you could make one contribution within the year we would be very grateful.

Please could all children bring a glue stick to school from Monday 11th September to use in class. Please could you ensure that it is reputable one and not coloured! When your child's glue stick has finished we will contact you for a replacement.

Thank you.

Birches School Local Academy Board (LAB)Governors

Governor details are posted on the school website <http://www.birches.staffs.sch.uk/lab/>

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, 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 on your allocated PE Day (please see curriculum Newsletter) and will be sent home on that day 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 every day 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.

Miss S Varricchione Headteacher Designated Safeguarding Lead		Miss S Hulme Assistant Headteacher Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Year 2)	
Mrs E Buckley EYFS Leader/Reception Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead		Mrs C Banks Club Manager (Club/Y3) Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	



Protect and safeguard the welfare of all our children.



If you have a concern about the safety of a child contact **Staffordshire Children's Advice and Support (SCAS)** by clicking [here](#) or by phone; **0300 111 8007**

Opening times: **Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5.00pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm**

Outside of the hours above, on weekends or bank holidays, please contact the **Emergency Duty Team** by phoning **0345 604 2886**

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 2023 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. Please ensure that all phones are kept in bags/pockets whilst on school grounds - Thank you!



Attendance

We are very proud of our attendance and punctuality at Birches, last academic year due to concerted efforts we were able to reduce our persistence absentees percentage down to below National and our overall absence rate including authorised and unauthorised below National. THANK YOU! Our attendance for the last academic year was 94.41%, therefore we will be continuing to work with the Educational Welfare Officer monitoring attendance and continuing our Attendance 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	
4 th September	School Closed – Staff Training
5 th September	Welcome back- Flexi Drop Off 8.30am-8.40am Only Reception/Nursery Parents on Playground Please at Drop Off
14 th September	Roald Dahl Day In School Activities in Houses- Carousel around each Class
20 th September	Individual and Sibling Photographs
21 st September	Dogs Trust into School (Y1-Y4)
22 nd September	Jeans for Genes Day
28 th September	Birches Football Fixture-Birches Vs St Chad's
29 th September	MacMillion Coffee Morning School Hall (from Drop Off 8.30am-10.30am)
October	Black History Month
2 nd October	Grandparents' Day
2-8 th October	Dyslexia Awareness Week
10 th October	World Mental Health Day
16 th October	Parent Interviews YN-Y4 3.30-6.00pm
19 th October	Parent Interviews YN-Y4 4.00-7.00pm

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.

Academic Year 2023- 2024

Please note the following Inset Days- School is CLOSED for children

Monday 4th September 2023, Monday 6th November 2023, Monday 19th February,
Friday 3rd May 2024, Monday 3rd June 2024

Autumn Term 2023

Inset day: Monday 4 September

Term starts: Tuesday 5 September

Holiday: Monday 30 October - Friday 3 November

Term ends: Friday 22 December

Holiday: Monday 25 December - Friday 5 January

Spring Term 2024

Term Starts: Monday 8 January

Holiday: Monday 12 February – Friday 16 February

Term Ends: Friday 22 March

Holiday: Monday 25 March – Friday 5 April

Easter Sunday: Sunday 31 March

Summer Term 2024

Term Starts: Monday 8 April

May Day: Monday 6 May

Holiday: Monday 27 May – Friday 31 May

Term Ends: Monday 22 July

Holiday: Tuesday 23 July – Friday 30 August

Return to School September 2024

INSET-Monday 2nd September 2024

Tuesday 3rd September 2024