



Birches First School

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

September 2025

Issue: 1

Birches-office@cmat.academy

01902 297910

British Value: Democracy

Birches Value: Success & Belief

Dear Parents...

Health Warning... **I apologise for the length of this Newsletter, the following months will not be so long nor overwhelming!**

A very warm welcome back to school!

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday! Overall what a magnificent holiday we have had, I don't think I have ever seen my grass so scorched! Also, didn't the lionesses do well, what an amazing achievement for the England Women's Team and again another great positive reinforcement for our children of our protected characteristics-well done, what an achievement to do it again!

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 a new teacher joining the Birches Team, Mrs Dudley, teaching Nursery Class during the Morning Sessions, 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!

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...a whole 7 week and 4 days!

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).

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!

Sleep well. See you in the morning!

Best wishes from Miss Varricchione & the Birches Team

September Information...

Our Office email has changed to:- Birches-office@cmat.academy

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

Please Note: Birches Club Costs commence from the time your child finishes school.

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 and **ONE** keyring for their Book Bag.

Homework

After much discussion and listening to parents' comments we have decided to continue 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/SpellingShed, 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 Friday 5th 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.

25th 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 3rd October

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

Forgotten Items

From September we will continue to place a box outside the office to place any forgotten items. Items will not be looked at until lunchtime when school monitors will help the office staff to distribute. Please ensure you have all items in the morning, lunch boxes, kits and water bottles to name a few! **ALL LABELLED!!**

Reminders!

- **School Uniform-** please remember we do have a Uniform Policy. School requests that PE T-shirts, School Jumpers and Cardigans have the Birches Logo. Girls' hair is to be tied up in bobbles-no large bows and no nail varnish or jewellery unless for religious purposes are to be worn. Trainers are to be predominately white/black and **VELCRO-children are only permitted laces if they can tie them independently**. If any parent is struggling with any aspect of uniform, please come to see me where a private and confidential discussion can take place. We have a Pre-Loved rail with lots of good-quality items that have been washed-please help yourselves, or speak to the office/me at the gate.
- When children are dismissed at the end of the day, I appreciate they say they are **'STARVING'!** Please could you wait until you are off the school site before opening snacks and eating them. We pride ourselves in being a Litter Free, ECO School. Thank you!
- Although I do love dogs, unfortunately the only dog permitted on site is our CMAT dog 'Ted' who will be in school as last year! This is due to Health and Safety Policies, so please could dogs be left at home whilst you collect your child(ren).
- Mrs Banks has kindly asked me to remind all club parents that they are to use the intercom on the pedestrian gate for collection and arrival.
- **Mobile phones.** We ask that mobile phones are not used on school site. This is in guidance with Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- **Sickness and Diarrhoea** Children with gastrointestinal illness (i.e., diarrhoea and vomiting) should remain off school for 48 hours after symptoms have abated. This is vital if the spread of infection is to be reduced. **This year we have pupils in school with little/no immunity and this could have severe impact on them. Please do not send your child in if they have had a bout of either, thank you.**
- **Remember** your child needs to bring an EMPTY water bottle to school every day to keep hydrated!
- **Mid Morning Snack**-we provide fruit for EYFS/Y1/2, **Y3/4** are asked to bring in a piece of fruit for snack-no cereal bars, cakes etc Fruit only. If you wish to provide your own fruit in EYFS/Y1/2 that is perfectly acceptable, again a piece of fruit only.
- **Lunchboxes**-if you provide sandwiches, please remember our lunchtime staff will believe this is the amount you expect your child to eat and will therefore prompt them to try to eat the contents. Lunchboxes should contain a sandwich/wrap which they will eat before any other item. Other items permitted-fruit, crisps (normal sized), yogurts, cake bars/rolls, small chocolate bar/treat **NO SWEETS**.
- **Appointments**-please ensure all Dental/Doctors/Eye Appointments are made outside school times, a huge thank you to all the parents who do this, it really minimises the disruption to the office and teaching and learning of the whole class.

Jeans for Genes Day Friday 19th 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 19th September.

Trainers are allowed to be worn on this day.

A **£1** donation will be collected via Class Teachers/Mrs Banks for your child to participate in this event from **Monday 15th September**.

Macmillan Coffee Morning 26th September

We will be hosting a Macmillan Coffee Morning on Friday, 26th September 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-Starting Monday 8th September

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

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

Tuesday Forest School Club (Y1-Y4) 3.10-4.00pm

Wednesday Girls Football (Y3 and Y4) 3.15-4.00pm

Wednesday- Story Rangers- External Club (YR/1/2)

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

Clubs will be live on Parent Pay for you to pay and secure your child's place hopefully by the end of today (Monday 1st). 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.
Class teachers will also deliver clubs throughout the year.

Selection for Birches Teams

Miss Hulme informs me that we have a busy sporting calendar once again this year! Last year we had several queries about our football selection and indeed other teams. Having tried lots of different ways over the years to pick the team for any sport, we have decided that this year teams will be chosen by watching the children in their Games lessons. Therefore, whoever the staff feel is the strongest field will be selected and that decision will be final. Can we ask that parents respect the difficult decision that the staff must make and support school. The children will be told that when representing Birches we expect high standards of general and sporting conduct and should this not be the case then they may lose their place and another child be chosen.

Parking – A brand new start! PLEASE!

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.

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 lots of extras the children receive without it! 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 **£2300**...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. The funds have contributed to half to the laptops **£2619.60**. The PFA have also funded all the new Reception Book Bags **£139.72**, our Year Four Leavers' Hoodies **£511.68** and Two Picnic Benches **£893.00**...THANK YOU SO MUCH!

During our AGM Meeting we will be discussing how the money can be used to support our children across the school for 2025-2026.

School Council 2025-2026

Please remember if your child wishes to be 'voted' to be their school class representatives they have until **Thursday 17th September** to put together a little something- talk, poster, poem anything that they feel confident with talking to their class. The class then following our British Value of Democracy, have their individual vote and the winning children will be announced during Celebration Assembly on **Friday 19th September**.

Please note if your child has been a School Councillor in Reception – Year 3 they are unable to re-apply until Y4.

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

Good Luck to All!

Attendance

We are very proud of our attendance and punctuality at Birches, however, it could be better! Last academic year due to concerted efforts we were able to reduce our persistent 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 95.60%, we are still aiming for 97%, therefore we will be continuing to work with the Educational Welfare Officer monitoring attendance and continuing with 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 and Marvellous Me 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.

Please do contact the school office if there are any issues with attendance and we will do what we can to help.

Operation Encompass

We have been an Operation Encompass School for several years now.

Operation Encompass is a program where school receives information in a timely manner about all police attended incidents of Domestic Abuse, to enable school to provide immediate support to the child, including making sure they feel safe and have access to necessary resources. Please be reassured regarding confidentiality, in addition we would not question children directly about the information that has been shared.

For more information please see: -

<https://www.operationencompass.org/>

Pupil Premium/Free School Lunches

The government has recently announced that there will be changes to the entitlement criteria for free school meals, but this won't be until September 2026. The entitlement criteria listed below is the one that still applies until that time.

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. Please contact the school office if you believe we should be receiving this entitlement.

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 £350 per service child who meets the eligibility criteria. Please advise the school office if you are new to school and meet this SPP criteria.

Juniper Education



We are delighted to announce that we have upgraded to Juniper Education -this will replace all communication that we have with parents, it is imperative that parents/carers use this platform. Juniper Education 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. Details will be sent to parents shortly inviting parents to download a new app.

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

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 8th 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.

Welcome to Year Group Meetings

Due to the success of the Welcome to Year Group meetings at the end of last year we are pleased to have the opportunity to deliver them once again in readiness for the year ahead. This will give you the opportunity to meet your child/ren's new teacher, receive day-to-day information, such as, when PE/Games are, Spelling Tests, what the Homework expectation is etc. including the opportunity to ask any questions.

It is such an important session to attend as with every year group change, there are a lot of differences and the session will inform and support you in supporting your child. As your child moves through the school, each year progresses and the expectations change in line with the National Curriculum, therefore the meeting really does help as it certainly has changed since we were all at school!

A survey will follow to book a place. Dates are listed at the end of the Newsletter.

Birches School Local Academy Board (LAB)Governors

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

Mr Tom Abbiss is our LAB Leader, you may contact him 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. **Please label everything!**

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/Smart Watches and Nail Varnish

We request that children do not wear any jewellery in school. Small watches/Fit Bits are permitted (NO SMART WATCHES)-however we will not take responsibility for any damage. 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-VELCRO -unless they can tie independently**, 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.**

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 Y4 TA 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 2025 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2024. Please ensure that all phones are kept in bags/pockets whilst on school grounds -Thank you!



Dates for the Diary	
1st September	School Closed – Staff Training
2nd September	Welcome back- Flexi Drop Off 8.30am-8.40am Only Reception/Nursery Parents allowed on the Playground at Drop Off-Thank you.
17th September	Welcome to Reception Meeting 5pm- No Children
19th September	Jeans for Genes Day
23rd September	Author Focus Day- Shirley Hughes Nursery Stay and Play 15 Hour Children (Mornings) 10.30-11.30am 30 Hour Children (All Day) 2-3pm
25th September	Individual and Sibling Photographs
26th September	Macmillan Coffee Morning School Hall (from Drop Off 8.30am-10.30am)
29th September	Y4- Welcome to Year Four Meeting- No Children
30th September	Y2 and Y3 Welcome to Y2 and Y3 Meeting- No Children (Held in Y2 and Y3 Classroom)
October	Black History/ADHD Awareness Month
1st October	Welcome to Y1 and Phonics Meeting 5pm- No Children
3rd October	Grandparents' Day
6-12th October	Dyslexia Awareness Week
10th October	World Mental Health Day
14th-20th October	Recycle Week
17th October	Diwali Celebrations
24th October	School Council Fundraising Day Break up-Normal Time 3.00/3.05/3.10/3.15pm Return to School Tuesday 4 th November-Happy Half Term

Birches Values (Highlighted is this half terms):-

Belief Independence Resilience Curiosity Honesty Enthusiasm Success

Fundamental British Value:-

Democracy

Our Mission Statement:

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

Key Dates for Next Academic Year 2025/2026

Please see below for the school calendar year and out INSET Dates.

INSET: School will be CLOSED for children on the below dates.

1/9/25

3/11/25

23/2/26

1/5/26

1/6/26

Autumn Term 2025

Inset day: Monday 1 September

Term Starts: Tuesday 2 September

Holiday: Monday 27 October – Friday 31 October

Term Ends: Friday 19 December

Holiday: Monday 22 December – Friday 2 January

Spring Term 2026

Term Starts: Monday 5 January

Holiday: Monday 16 February – Friday 20 February

Term Ends: Friday 27 March

Holiday: Monday 30 March – Friday 10 April

Easter Sunday: Sunday 5 April

Summer Term 2026

Term Starts: Monday 13 April

May Day: Monday 4 May

Holiday: Monday 25 May – Friday 29 May

Term Ends: Monday 20 July

Holiday: Tuesday 21 July – Monday 31 August

Autumn Term 2026

Inset day: Tuesday 1 September

Term Starts: Wednesday 2 September

