



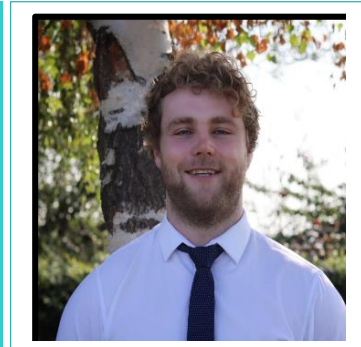
Christmas Newsletter

Where a love of learning grows

Merry Christmas everyone! Everybody has been getting in to the festive spirit at Birch Wood – Ashton House; the Christmas trees are up, final preparations are being put in place for the KS3 Christmas Performance, with all staff and students putting in their final burst of energy for the end of a long, but productive term.

Our curriculum enables our young people to make academic progress, integrate with the community and develop essential communication and interaction skills. It has been a privilege to witness our young people making progress in these areas over the last 8 weeks.

Joe Knowles
Assistant Head – Ashton House



What has happened this term?

Ashton House attendance – 88% – Well Done!

Good attendance is important because all evidence suggests that students who have low attendance won't progress as well as those who don't.

(pupils with very complex medical conditions are not included in this, as their circumstances are very different)

Christmas Bazaar – Expertly organised by teacher Charlotte Adu and Anita Lees, class teams showcased their entrepreneurial skills and got the opportunity to develop their creative and numeracy skills as we transformed the main hall into a bustling Christmas Bazaar. Again, our raffle was very successful thanks to the amazing donations from the community – thank you! The students were very impressive this year as we had a variety of products that were sold, from sweets, Christmas stockings, to personalised baubles and wood craft. There are no limits to the talents of our young people and the wonderful staff they work with. Thanks to the parents, carers and members of the local community for supporting our wonderful yearly event, this year we raised £486.28!



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Motorcycle Club-Thank you so much to the Bikers who joined the Nottingham Triumph Owners Motorcycle Club Toy Run! It was an incredible experience for all involved. The amazing toy donations were greatly appreciated and had been wrapped up by Santa's elves so that Santa could deliver them to our students during his special visit to school in the last week of term. Also, a huge thanks to all of our staff volunteers for organising refreshments for the bikers!



Rickshaw Challenge



Students at Birch Wood Vale, Ashton House and in the provision at Grange Drive took part in the annual Rickshaw Enterprise Challenge event. Two weeks prior to Children in Need Day, students began to plan their stalls in their Maths lessons, coming up with numerous ideas and working as a team to choose an idea and put it into action.

On the day it was great to see our young people enjoying the activities and practicing their money handling skills. All students had the opportunity to be a stall holder and go around the stalls as customers. There was a wide range of stalls across the school sites including nerf gun target practice, ping pong, ten pin bowling, sensory toy raffle and even a Karaoke and disco. Students raised over £400 from their stalls that morning to support Children in Need. The non-uniform day added further funds. Well done to all involved!

Head teacher's Christmas card competition

Congratulations to Noah - 7LC and The Kingfisher's class- these entries for the Head teacher's Christmas card competition were successful in coming joint first! The designs will be sent via an E-card to all Birch Wood families and the community this Christmas. Noah has also won a £10 Amazon voucher and the Kingfisher's will have a special reward for their excellent work.

Well done to everyone who entered, there were some lovely designs.



Young Writer's Poetry Award Competition

This half term, a number of our young people entered the "Young Writer's Poetry Award Competition" where they submitted a poem based on the theme of identity. The basis for the poem could also be about what empowers our young people. All poems submitted were fantastic and some of our young people's poems were selected to be published! Below is a poem submitted by Poppy, who is a member of the "The Swifts" It is a true reflection of the huge talent within the young people at Ashton House.

'Just be yourself'

Changing my tone,

So I won't be alone,

I like the things that I hate just so I can have a mate,

And all I hear is "just be yourself darling".

Become the person they want me to be,

Although everyone can see,

That this just isn't me!

And they are all saying "just be yourself darling".

I have hopes and dreams like rowing boats down the streams,

No one would know this fact,

As long as I keep up this soul absorbing act,

And again all I can hear is "just be yourself darling".

Because in a world of perfection and uniform,

We are taught to be 'normal' and conform,

To the standards that reduce you from being you,

Until you no longer feel anything ...but blue.

And I wish someone could've told me "just be yourself darling".



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In this world our uniqueness defines our sense of self,
And this system is damaging our mental health,
But no longer will we conform for society,
Because being you is your new priority,
And you will say "I can just be myself darling".

We are taking a stand and turning the table.
We are going create a society that embraces and enables.
Our personalities aren't a disease so stop searching for that toxic cure,
Because you don't have to act and play the part anymore,
and you can simply "just be yourself darling".

Poppy H – The Swifts

Christmas Production

It was a delight to welcome back live performances to an audience of student's families on the 9th December. Students and class teams worked with our Drama staff Dan and Matt to pull off an amazing Christmas Production based around the school's ENABLES ethos.

Key Stage 4 and 5 Students took on the part of Narrators and back stage production crew.

JM performed The Nutcracker.

7LC performed The Christmas Dinner

8ES performed The elf who couldn't read.

9CB performed Different-a great thing to be!

Yard performed Christmas Chaos in the Yard

Swifts performed The Christmas Cheer.

Their performances made us laugh and brought a tear to our eye. Each student made us so proud. Overcoming nerves to put in a beautiful performance. A big thank you to Dan, Matt and Grace for writing, organising and producing this beautiful event!



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The Yard

At the end of this half term, The Yard have welcomed back Jeanette, from her maternity leave, to co-tutor The Yard class once again. Jeanette has settled back in wonderfully and all the young people are very pleased to have her back supporting them. We have also welcomed Janice, who has joined us from Grange Drive, to support within the class. Janice has been quick to form relationships and is supporting the students wonderfully.

This half term the young people within The Yard have begun to go out into the community once again, to work on their independence and safety when in the wider world. Next term- as the weather improves and with our additional staff we will have even more opportunities to explore local parks and complete shopping tasks.

Some members of The Yard chose to enter a KS3 athletics competition, with 12 other schools. The young people were sensational in both their performance and attitude throughout the event.

Pupil Voice

Urban - *"The KS3 athletics trip was brilliant. There were lots of activities to get you going. The competition was very fair and we did really well to come in 8th place. I loved the creativity of the events, especially the javelin throwing".*



The Yard at the Christmas Tree Festival, supported by apprentice staff member, Dylan.



The Yard at the Christmas Bazaar, where their hard work raised £128 for the class!



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The Yard at the Rickshaw Challenge.



Young people from The Yard and 7LC celebrating their certificates at the KS3 athletics competition.

The Den

The Den have been working very hard this half term in all of their sessions. A particular triumph has been within their PE sessions. The Den have been exploring “invasion games” this half term and have focused on Basketball in particular. The Engagement and improvement seen during the course of this block has been phenomenal. A special mention must go out to Stuart, who can now access a full game of basketball and display all the skills that have been practised throughout the block. Stuart also won the end of term shooting contest, beating all the staff too.

Noah has been researching, designing and developing items to sell at the Christmas Bazaar during his “Enterprise” sessions this half term. This culminated in Noah, along with Dylan, setting up their stall, interacting with eager buyers and handling the money earned, throughout the event. Noah and Dylan showed fantastic maturity, entrepreneurship and social skills to raise money for The Den.

Pupil Voice

Stuart – *“I think that PE has felt different this term. I’ve never felt this way before about PE. I wasn’t scared anymore and I feel I have got better each session in Basketball. I’m really good at “lay-ups” and can score often.”*



The Den during their End of Block "Shoot out" competition.



The Den during the Rickshaw Challenge.



The Den during the Christmas Bazaar.

The Sand Martins

The Sand Martins are continuing their P16 Curriculum, with a focus on preparing our young people for life after Birch Wood. We have been working on our Job interview skills and performing mock interviews within school. This has also led to Charlie NS having his first job interviews whilst others are sending in lots of applications. We are extremely proud of all of the young people for taking this brave and essential step in adult life. Kyle has started his work experience within Birch Wood, working alongside our I.T. Technician, David. Kale has been considering his next steps, and has subsequently applied for a College course related to his passion for agriculture.

As a class, all our young people have continued to access the community, visiting shops, Cafes, the Bank, the Post Office, Libraries and the Park. Each visit has been purposeful with the students completing tasks that they would be required to in adulthood. Some of our young people have taken the opportunity to have independent lunch periods, within the community, which has been a great success.



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As part of their DofE course and ASDAN, The Sand Martins have been planning, organising and leading on events within Birch Wood such as class disco's and Christmas parties for some of our younger classes within Birch Wood Vale and Ashton House. The young people have had to plan how they can run these events and try to raise money for various charities, challenging their entrepreneurial skills.

Pupil Voice

Kyle - *"I have been working with David, Birch Woods's I.T. Technician. I have really enjoyed it and I have learnt lots of new things. I can now re-image computers and set accounts up on their domains. David has been really helpful and I like working with him. I am hoping to be a Computer Technician in the future."*



The Sand Martins at the Christmas Tree Festival.



Kale, making friends with an Owl and showing no fear.



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Luke has been displaying inspirational effort with his physiotherapy this half term.



Tegan earned her "Peer Mentor" certificate this half term. Great work Tegan!

The Swifts

The young people in The Swifts have also been focusing on preparing for life beyond Birch Wood as we have seen Ellie H and Daniel P taking part in work experience at Pablo's Horse Sanctuary. Both have been exceptional in their work effort, getting stuck into the mucking out after the horses, ponies and Shetland ponies.

Poppy H has undertaken work experience within Birch Wood, supporting in the Primary Autism Provision, in preparation for her applications for childcare courses. Poppy, has done wonderfully well, building relationships with the young people and utilising her natural nurturing instincts to add value to each younger person she supports.

Joel T has also been undertaking work experience within Birch Wood, supporting Ali Nix in teaching PE to her Year 7 & 8 group. Joel has been fantastic interacting with the young people and guiding them in a busy and dynamic environment. The feedback we have received from Ali has been nothing but exceptional. These experiences will benefit Joel as he begins to apply for course at College that relate to sport.



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Pupil Voice Poppy H – *“I’m enjoying my work experience with The Burrow. I am always nervous beforehand, but when I get there it’s so good and I think that one day, I can become a teacher. I love supporting the younger children, and it gets better each week as they get to know me better. I would really like to spend more time in the classroom to see how the student’s day unfolds and affects them”.*



The Swifts at the Christmas Tree Festival.



The Swifts working on their ASDAN Maths work.



Ellie and Daniel getting into the festive spirit whilst at Birch Wood College.



Ellie and Daniel reporting back from their visit to the local council office.



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Key Dates Ahead

Tuesday 3 rd January	Staff Inset Day – School Closed
Wednesday 4 th January	School reopens
Monday 30 th Jan – Friday 3 rd February	National Storytelling week
Monday 6 th – Friday 10 th February	National Tube Feeding Awareness week
Wednesday 15 th February	International Angelman Syndrome day
Thursday 16 th February	Yr 11 Parents Evening