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Birch Wood College

Newsletter Summer Term 1 2026

Welcome to our Summer Term 1 edition of the Birch Wood College newsletter. It has been another busy and successful half term for all of our students. Students have continued to achieve so much this half term, and I hope you enjoy reading about their successes, experiences, and achievements. I hope you all have a lovely half-term break.

Please take a look at the key dates in the newsletter so that you are aware of what is coming up after the holiday.

Claire Wood
Head of Birch Wood College

BWCA Visit to Belton House

BWCA visited Belton House to support two ASDAN modules: one focusing on the history of a historic building and the other on researching a national conservation organisation. Students enjoyed guided tours exploring architectural styles and the importance of preservation, alongside interactive workshops on historical research methods. This hands-on experience developed their understanding of heritage and encouraged critical thinking. They also produced some excellent work through presentations and creative projects, making this a valuable and enjoyable educational visit.





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Duke of Edinburgh

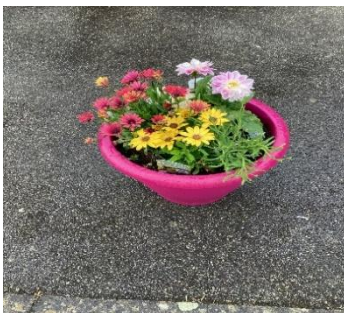
DofE students completed their practice expedition last week in preparation for their qualifying Bronze expedition in June. Over the two days, students navigated as a group on routes to Little Dalby and Great Dalby. We were incredibly impressed by the teamwork, resilience, and navigation skills they demonstrated throughout the expedition. Students covered well over 20km across the two days and should be very proud of what they achieved.



Gardening

BWCN have been using some of the funding awarded through the Trumpton bid to develop the garden area at the back of the college. Students have planted lettuce, carrots, and spinach, helping to create a productive growing space while developing their gardening skills and understanding of how food is grown.

In addition, students planted sweet peas, begonias, dahlias, and lavender in planters around the new picnic benches. These plants will not only help to encourage wildlife into the garden area, but will also create an attractive and welcoming outdoor space for students to enjoy at lunchtime.





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Preparing for GCSEs

Students at Birch Wood Vale are working hard as they prepare for their upcoming GCSE examinations. With a clear focus on revision and building confidence, they are taking part in structured lessons, targeted intervention sessions, and independent study to strengthen their knowledge and skills across all subjects. Staff continue to provide encouragement, support, and guidance, helping students to manage exam pressure while developing resilience and a positive mindset. As the exams approach, there is a strong sense of determination across the school, with students motivated to achieve their very best and take their next steps with confidence.

BWCN Visit to Burton Lazars Farm

Class BWCN visited Burton Lazars Farm, where they were welcomed by Farmer Tess. The session began in the barn, where students fed the 18-month-old beef cattle and the 4-month-old calves. The cows were initially curious about their visitors, but soon became comfortable with the group.

The students' next task was to feed the lambs in the nursery barn. Farmer Tess explained that many of these lambs had been rejected by their mothers and therefore needed additional care. Students were also given the opportunity to practise lambing using a model sheep expecting twins, helping them to understand the process of caring for newborn lambs.

The visit then continued to the hen house, where students checked for newly laid eggs and successfully collected seven eggs.

Farmer Tess also introduced the students to the different crops grown on the farm, including wheat, barley, and oats. Students examined the crops to see how healthy they looked and learned how they are harvested, used, and processed into a range of products.

Building Independence and Confidence at BWC

Students at BWC have been working incredibly hard this term to strengthen their independence, preparation for adulthood, and self-belief. Across lessons and practical activities, they are learning new ways to work and discovering tools that help them succeed.

One exciting development has been the introduction of our new headphones. Students are exploring how to use their voices to create written work, helping them express their ideas more confidently and independently. This approach reduces barriers, boosts motivation, and supports each learner in developing essential life and communication skills.

We are proud of the determination and resilience our students show every day as they continue building the foundations they need for adulthood. Their progress is a real celebration of what they can achieve.





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Exemplary Leadership Programme (ELP)



What is the ELP?

Research shows that a strong behaviour culture, combined with a well-sequenced, ambitious curriculum and excellent teaching, transforms pupils' outcomes and life chances.

The ELP, developed by The Knowledge Hub with expert school leaders and educationalists, is designed to help leaders drive whole-school improvement. It focuses on three key areas:

- Building and sustaining an exemplary behaviour culture
- Developing a knowledge-rich curriculum with subject leaders
- Delivering the curriculum effectively, grounded in evidence and subject expertise

The programme is led by experienced tutors from a range of school contexts, including inner-city, rural and coastal settings, across primary and secondary phases.

What does Birch Wood do?

Through our work in curriculum development and high-quality teaching and learning, we are proud to be a host school. In this role, we welcome senior leaders from across the country and give them the opportunity to see first-hand the exceptional work of our staff and pupils in everyday practice. This term's visit focuses on curriculum enactment, exploring how our ambitious curriculum is brought to life through effective teaching and learning in the classroom.



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Attendance

In August 2024, the government introduced the statutory guidance **Working Together to Improve School Attendance**. In line with this guidance, Birch Wood School's Attendance Policy was updated and can be found on the school website.

Above
95%

Excellent! Well done! This will help all aspects of their progress and life in school.

85% -
95%

Average! Well done! Try to build on this

Below
85%

Cause for Concern
It **IS** affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting students learning.

At Birch Wood School, we fully understand that some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance, including long-term physical or mental health needs. We will always take a support-first approach to improving attendance, with a focus on understanding each family's circumstances and putting the right support in place. Every situation will be considered individually and reviewed regularly to ensure joined-up pastoral care is available where needed.

The school's Senior Attendance Champion is **Kate Draycott**

Absence from school:

If your child is going to be absent from school, a parent or carer must notify the school of the reason for absence by 7.30am, or as soon as reasonably possible, by calling the school office on 01664 483340.

Leave of Absence Requests

A leave of absence may be granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time a pupil is authorised to be absent. As leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely to be approved for the purpose of a family holiday.



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The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant background to the request. Any request should be submitted as soon as possible and, where possible, at least four weeks before the absence. Please ask your child's teacher or the office staff for a Leave of Absence Form.

Key Dates:

Monday 25 th May to Friday 29 th May	Half Term
Monday 1 st June 2026	Summer Term 2 – Students back to school
Wednesday 17 th and Thursday 18 th June	Duke of Edinburgh qualifying expedition
Thursday 25 th June	Moving Up Day
Sunday 28 th June 2026	Curve Performance – Moving Together!
Tuesday 7 th July	Birch Wood Festival Day
Wednesday 8 th July 2026	BWCA Trip to Rutland Water
Wednesday 8 th July 2026	KS4 and Post 16 Prom at Grange Drive 7pm – 9pm
Thursday 9 th July 2026	Last day of term

Residential Visits:

Residential visits promote personal growth, life skills, and resilience among our students. Below is a list of residential visits that will take place for students across Birch Wood School. We continually assess our trips and visits to ensure that they are safe and this may mean that closer to the time, plans need to be changed or cancelled based on the needs of the group or changes to the accommodation.

More information on future residential visits will follow ...