



Grange Drive

Birch Wood
Vale SchoolBirch Wood
Ashton HouseBirch Wood
College

Birch Wood School

Whole School Newsletter

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we come to the end of another academic year, it is lovely to share our summer newsletter with you. This year, we have brought together news and celebrations from across our sites into one whole-school newsletter, so we can celebrate the achievements, experiences and progress of our young people as one Birch Wood School community.

It has been a year full of learning, opportunities, trips, events and special moments, and we are incredibly proud of everything our pupils have achieved. None of this would be possible without the close partnership we have with our families. Thank you for working with us so positively and closely throughout the year. Our school community is very strong, and by continuing to work together, we give our young people the best possible opportunities to thrive and achieve the best outcomes.

I would also like to say a heartfelt thank you to all of our staff. Every member of the Birch Wood team plays an important part in making our school what it is. From the creative and inspiring learning opportunities planned by our teachers, to the crucial relationships built by our learning support teams, to the dedication of our office, site, pastoral, therapy and wider support teams who help keep school life running smoothly each day — we are extremely grateful. Together, they create learning environments where pupils feel safe, happy, supported and able to develop a love of learning.

As always in school life, the end of the year also brings some changes. We will be very sad to say goodbye to Tom Smith, Head of School at Birch Wood Vale, who leaves us at the end of this academic year after many years of dedicated service. Tom has made a significant contribution to Birch Wood School and to the lives and outcomes of so many pupils. He is a warm, kind and thoughtful leader, and we know many families will join us in wishing him every happiness and success in his next chapter. We also look forward to welcoming Alex as part of the next stage for Birch Wood Vale.

We hope you enjoy reading about just some of the many highlights from across the school. Thank you, as always, for your continued support, and we wish all of our pupils, families and staff a restful and enjoyable summer break.

Tom Bradley-Hewell

Associate Head Teacher



Grange Drive



Birch Wood
Vale School



Birch Wood
Ashton House



Birch Wood
College

Grange Drive

Nightingales and Kingfishers - A trip to Belton House

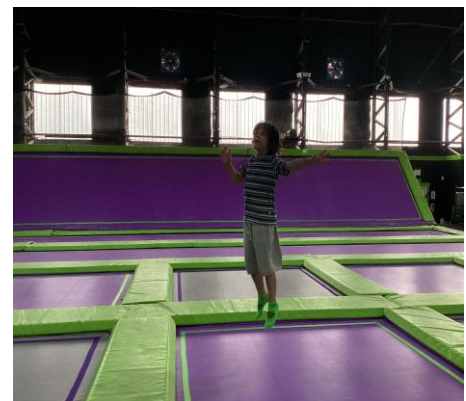
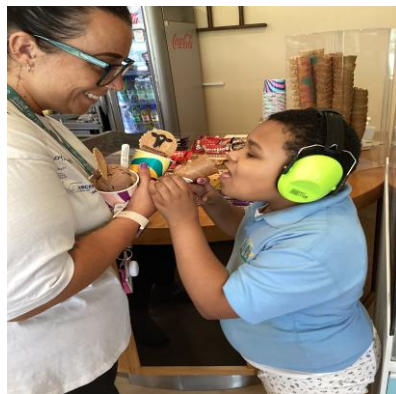
For their end-of-year trip, Nightingales and Kingfishers visited Belton House. They had a wonderful day exploring the beautiful grounds, spotting deer, enjoying the open spaces and taking part in games of chase with their friends. Pupils showed great excitement and curiosity as they explored their surroundings, and it was lovely to see them sharing the experience together. They also enjoyed a picnic in the sunshine before ending the day with lots of fun on the play equipment. It was a memorable trip and a lovely way to celebrate the end of the school year.





Chiffchaffs – Fernley’s Ice Cream and Jump Giants

Chiffchaffs spent a lovely morning at Fernley’s Ice Cream, where they enjoyed tasting delicious ice cream and exploring the indoor play area together. Pupils had lots of opportunities to play, climb and interact with their friends, and it was wonderful to see their confidence and excitement throughout the visit. They also had an amazing time at Jump Giants, bouncing on the trampolines, trying out the different activities and celebrating the end of term in a really fun and active way. Everyone returned to school full of smiles after a very memorable couple of trips.



Peacocks and Robins - Twinlakes

Peacocks and Robins had an amazing time at Twinlakes for their end-of-year trips. The sun shone, and pupils enjoyed exploring the many activities on offer, including rollercoasters, the big bounce cushions and the train. There was lots of laughter and excitement throughout the day as pupils tried new experiences, spent time with their friends and celebrated the end of a busy year together. It was lovely to see everyone enjoying the sunshine, showing confidence and making special memories before the summer break.





Grange Drive



Birch Wood
Vale School



Birch Wood
Ashton House



Birch Wood
College

Penguins – Jump Giants

Penguins enjoyed a fun trip to Jump Giants for their end-of-year celebration. Pupils explored the trampoline areas, practised bouncing, balancing and jumping safely, and had great fun moving between the different activity zones. They enjoyed spending time with their friends, trying new challenges and building confidence in a lively, active environment. Everyone came back from the trip full of energy, smiles and lots to talk about!



Wrens - Stonehurst Farm trip

Wrens visited Stonehurst Farm for their final trip of the year and had a wonderful time exploring the farm. They saw sheep, goats and chickens, stroked guinea pigs and ponies, and enjoyed getting close to the animals in a calm and hands-on way. Pupils also walked around the pond to see the ducks, took in the sights and sounds of the farm, and showed lots of curiosity as they explored their surroundings. A real highlight of the day was the very exciting tractor ride, which brought plenty of smiles and laughter. It was a lovely way for Wrens to celebrate the end of the year together.



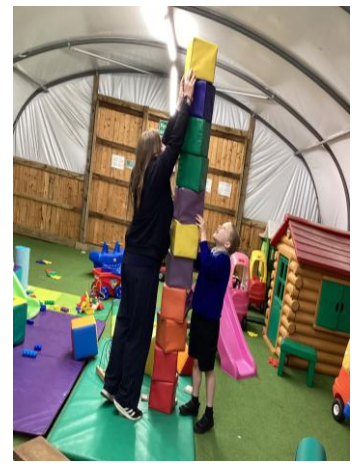


Grange Drive

Birch Wood
Vale SchoolBirch Wood
Ashton HouseBirch Wood
College

Hummingbirds - Fernley's Ice Cream

Hummingbirds have had a busy and exciting half term, including weekly swimming sessions at Waterfield and a lovely visit to Fernley's Ice Cream. During their swimming sessions, pupils have continued to build water confidence, practise listening skills and enjoy being active together in the pool. At Fernley's, they enjoyed choosing and tasting delicious ice cream before spending time in the play area, where they built, rode, climbed and jumped on the equipment. It was wonderful to see pupils exploring, playing together and making the most of these fun end-of-term experiences.





Grange Drive

Birch Wood
Vale SchoolBirch Wood
Ashton HouseBirch Wood
College

Birch Wood Vale

Discovery Esports - Mario Kart

On 20 June, students from Birch Wood Vale and Ashton House took part in a Discovery Esports Mario Kart tournament at Keyham Lodge. The event gave students a fantastic opportunity to enjoy friendly competition while developing teamwork, communication and strategic thinking. It was wonderful to see them encouraging one another, building confidence and making positive connections with students from other schools.



8CM – Gulliver's Valley

The children in 8CM had a fantastic time on their end-of-year trip to Gulliver's Valley. They enjoyed a well-deserved day of fun, laughter and excitement, from thrilling rides to adventurous playgrounds. Pupils behaved brilliantly throughout and represented Birch Wood School with pride.





Grange Drive

Birch Wood
Vale SchoolBirch Wood
Ashton HouseBirch Wood
College

The Curve Showcase

Birch Wood Vale pupils proudly took part in the *Moving Together Showcase* at Curve Theatre, performing alongside dancers from across the region in an inspiring and celebratory afternoon. Embracing this year's theme, *Moving Through Time*, students explored a range of eras and ideas through expressive movement, incorporating sign language to enhance communication and storytelling within their performances. Their work demonstrated creativity, teamwork, and growing confidence on a professional stage. The energy in the theatre was electric, with an emotional audience cheering and applauding the pupils' efforts and achievements. It was a truly memorable experience and a wonderful opportunity for our students to showcase their talents while being part of a vibrant and inclusive community event.



11EB – Leicester Tigers

11EB enjoyed an exciting visit to the Leicester Tigers rugby ground. They explored the stadium, took part in touch rugby games against three other schools, learned about the history of the club and discovered what happens behind the scenes on match days. It was a memorable and inspiring experience for everyone involved.





Grange Drive

Birch Wood
Vale SchoolBirch Wood
Ashton HouseBirch Wood
College

Murder in Nursery Land

Students from Birch Wood have truly showcased the results of their incredible hard work during rehearsals for *Murder in Nursery Land*, a fast-paced detective story written by our Drama Lead, Suzanne. They performed two exciting shows for their peers in the week leading up to the summer break, bringing this classic whodunnit to life with memorable characters, clever twists, and plenty of red herrings. Filled with humour and energy throughout, the production was a fantastic success, and our students rose brilliantly to the challenge, delivering a performance to remember.



STEM Day with BMFA

Students enjoyed a STEM Day with BMFA, learning about model aircraft and aviation. The activities helped bring STEM subjects to life through practical problem-solving, teamwork and engineering in action. The visit broadened students' horizons and helped them explore future possibilities in aviation, aerospace and other STEM-related careers.





Grange Drive



Birch Wood
Vale School



Birch Wood
Ashton House



Birch Wood
College

GCSEs Completed

We are incredibly proud of the students from Birch Wood Vale and Ashton House for the commitment they showed throughout the GCSE examination period. They approached each exam with calmness, focus and determination, reflecting the values of our school community. We celebrate their hard work, resilience and positive attitude, and wish them every success with their results.

Farewell to Tom Smith

After nine and a half years at Birch Wood Tom Smith is hanging up his World Book Day BFG ears, putting down his rapper's shades and mic and saying goodbye to wearing his Leicester Tigers kits on Sports Day.

In his time at Birch Wood, he has taught (and rapped) maths lessons and led a number of PE lessons as well as many others – even some science on occasion. Those who have been taught by Tom have been very lucky indeed – he makes every lesson fun and engaging, getting the best out of each and every student.

Break and lunchtimes won't be the same – Tom playing basketball (unfair height advantage), Tom teaching football skills, rugby throwing skills, playing cricket, "tig", hide and seek. A kind word here, a prompt there, raising a young person's self-esteem and self-belief and encouraging their "can do" attitude to develop and grow. As Head of Birch Wood Vale, he is well respected by students and staff alike. He is calm, patient, just the right amount of humour when necessary, always makes time to listen and to make people feel valued.

Tom – you will leave a void here at Birch Wood but we wish you all the best in your future adventures – whatever they may be. We will miss you!





Grange Drive

Birch Wood
Vale SchoolBirch Wood
Ashton HouseBirch Wood
College

Birch Wood College

BWCA

Students 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.

Let's get walking!

Students in BWCA have been taking part in daily lunchtime walks to promote healthy, active lifestyles. This routine helps them build fitness, develop positive habits, and enjoy fresh air and social time with peers. The walks also support wellbeing by giving students a calm, structured break in the middle of the day, helping them return to lessons feeling refreshed and ready to learn.

ASDAN – Countryside walks

As part of their ASDAN work, BWCA students completed a countryside walk from Melton Mowbray to Burton Lazars and on to Kirby Bellars. They used maps, compasses and an Ordnance Survey map while following the Countryside Code. The activity helped students develop independence, personal safety awareness, teamwork and respect for other path users, local residents, wildlife and farmland.





Grange Drive



Birch Wood
Vale School



Birch Wood
Ashton House



Birch Wood
College

BWCN

Students have had a very busy and productive term, completing exams and finishing their work towards their ASDAN qualification. For our Father's Day Pop-up Shop, the students created shirt-style sweet bags. They visited local shops to carefully select the sweets for the fillings, enjoying the experience of choosing, scanning, and paying for their items independently. A big thank you to everyone who supported the shop by purchasing these – your support is greatly appreciated.

We also had a fantastic day out learning about the history and heritage of Belton House and its beautiful gardens. The students worked together to prepare a class picnic, which we shared before exploring the adventure playground.





Grange Drive

Birch Wood
Vale SchoolBirch Wood
Ashton HouseBirch Wood
College

Duke of Edinburgh Expedition

On Wednesday 17th June, a group of students completing the expedition section of their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award set off on their two-day walking challenge. Well prepared for all weather conditions, six determined students began their journey from Burrough on the Hill. Unlike previous years, the weather was unusually grey for June, however, this proved to be refreshing, particularly during the challenging climb to the top of Burrough Hill!

Throughout the day, the team worked hard to stay on course, carefully tracking their location on maps and applying their compass skills to check their direction. It was fantastic to see three years of practice and preparation come together so effectively during this expedition.

By the end of the first day, the group had successfully covered 10km. Although feet were sore, spirits remained high as everyone looked forward to a relaxing evening at Grange Drive. Before they could unwind, however, there was the important task of setting up camp. Once again, the students showed great teamwork and enthusiasm, ensuring that everyone had a comfortable place to sleep—well clear of any ants' nests!

Dinner preparations followed, with the team cooking noodles, hot dog sausages and vegetarian chicken using Trangias. Dessert was a welcome treat of Swiss roll and biscuits.



After washing up, the students began to relax with showers, games and use of the facilities at Grange Drive before settling down for the night. Unfortunately, sleep didn't come easily for everyone, as the nearby football club screening the England match made for a lively atmosphere, complete with cheering and air horns!

The second day began early for some, with a few campers awake as early as 5am. By 9am, however, everyone was up, dressed and ready to begin the next stage. Tents were packed away, and the group set off towards Great Dalby.

Once again, the students demonstrated excellent teamwork, navigating a range of challenges along the route, including broken stiles, rising temperatures and even some rather inquisitive cows!



Grange Drive



Birch Wood
Vale School



Birch Wood
Ashton House



Birch Wood
College

After completing another 10km, the group returned to college to debrief and recover. It's safe to say that everyone was grateful to head home for a hot shower, a home-cooked meal and the comfort of their own bed.

We are incredibly proud of our DofE students—congratulations to each of them on successfully completing their Bronze Award.



Whole-School Pride Day

Birch Wood School was delighted to come together to celebrate Pride Day. Pupils and staff across our school community embraced the values of kindness, respect and inclusion, celebrating diversity and recognising what makes each of us unique.

Throughout the celebrations, pupils enjoyed a wide range of fun and meaningful activities, including temporary tattoos, a colourful nail bar, face painting, karaoke, a dance party and a whole-school Pride walk. Pupils from all sites came together at Grange Drive for the parade and sensory rainbow activities. It was a joyful day and a wonderful reminder of the inclusive community we are proud to be part of.





Sports Day

Birch Wood Vale's Sports Day was a fantastic success, with pupils showing enthusiasm, determination and teamwork throughout. Everyone took part with big smiles, cheered on their friends and celebrated each other's achievements. The atmosphere was full of excitement, excellent sportsmanship and community spirit. A huge well done to everyone who participated and helped make the day so memorable. We are very proud of everyone for making Sports Day such a positive and successful event.



Grange Drive hosted their Sports Day in the glorious sunshine on Tuesday 30th June. Pupils were split into colour teams and took part in a range of track, field and sensory-based activities, earning points for their teams throughout the day. Everyone represented their teams with enthusiasm, determination and a fantastic attitude.

A real highlight was seeing pupils encourage one another, try their very best and demonstrate excellent sportsmanship. We also celebrated our "Spirit of the Games" winners, recognising pupils who showed resilience, positivity, kindness and teamwork. Thank you to all staff who helped make the day such a success, and congratulations to the Green Team, this year's Grange Drive Sports Day champions.





Birch Wood Celebration Day!

Birch Wood Celebration Day was a fantastic whole-school event, bringing together young people from across all of our sites to celebrate the end of another successful year. Pupils enjoyed a wide range of exciting activities throughout the day, including accessible bikes, an inflatable obstacle course, Amazing Animals, karaoke, darts, pop bottle rockets, dance activities, dodgeball, cinema experiences, outdoor games, splash zone fun, face painting, music and class-based celebration activities. It was wonderful to see so many pupils trying something new, spending time with friends and taking part in experiences that were planned to be fun, inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Across Grange Drive, Birch Wood Vale, Ashton House and Birch Wood College, the day had a real celebration feel. Our young people moved between activities, enjoyed shared experiences across sites and had opportunities to explore, play, perform, create and relax. A huge thank you goes to all staff who helped organise, set up, supervise and support the day. Celebration Day was a lovely way to recognise the achievements of our pupils and to end the year together as one Birch Wood community.





Grange Drive



Birch Wood
Vale School



Birch Wood
Ashton House



Birch Wood
College

Useful Information for Parents and Carers

Attendance

In August 2024, the government introduced statutory guidance called **Working Together to Improve School Attendance**. Birch Wood School's Attendance Policy has been updated in line with this guidance and is available on the school website.

Above
95%

85% -
95%

Below
85%

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

Average! Well done! Try to build on this.

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

At Birch Wood School, we 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, considering each situation individually and working with families through joined-up pastoral care where needed.

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

Absence from school:

If your child is going to be absent from school, please notify us with the reason for absence by 7.30am, or as soon as reasonably possible. You can call the school office on 01664 483340 or email pupilabsence@birchwoodschool.co.uk.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is always one of our key priorities at Birch Wood School. We are committed to working in partnership with families and external agencies to help keep children and young people safe, supported and able to thrive. If you are worried about a child, young person or family, there are a number of services that can offer advice, guidance and support.

Leicestershire County Council's Family Help service provides early help and support for children, young people and families where difficulties cannot be fully supported by universal services alone. Families can contact the service for further information on **0116 305 8727**. Further information is available here: [Help for children and families | Leicestershire County Council](#).

FreeVA offers confidential support for anyone affected by domestic abuse across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. FreeVA can be contacted on **0808 802 0028**. Further information is available here: [Free from Violence & Abuse | Support & Services | Freeva](#). The 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline is also available on **0808 2000 247**. If someone is in immediate danger, please call **999**.



Grange Drive



Birch Wood
Vale School



Birch Wood
Ashton House



Birch Wood
College

Academic Year 2026-2027 Term Dates

Autumn Term

School Opens to students: Monday 24th August 2026

August Bank Holiday: Monday 31st August 2026

Mid Term Break: Monday 19th October to Friday 23rd October 2026

School Closes: Friday 18th December 2026

Number of school days: 78 days

Spring Term

School Opens to students: Tuesday 5th January 2027

Mid Term Break: Monday 15th February to Friday 19th February 2027

School Closes: Friday 19th March 2027

Number of school days: 49 days

Summer Term

School Opens to students: Monday 5th April 2027

May Day Bank Holiday: Monday 3rd May 2027

Mid Term Break: Monday 31st May to Friday 4th June 2027

School Closes: Thursday 8th July 2027

Number of school days: 63 days

Total school days: 190 days

5 Staff training days: Wednesday 19th August 2026

Thursday 20th August 2026

Friday 21st August 2026

Monday 26th October 2026

Monday 4th January 2027