



# Birtley House Highlights

17th October 2025

## Message from our Headteacher

What an exciting half term it has been! Being a new Headteacher, I can truly see how amazing all our pupils and staff are at Birtley House. Every day, I witness the dedication, enthusiasm, and care that makes our school such a special place.

Our recent parent coffee morning was a great success, and it was wonderful to see so many of our families at Birtley House. Building strong relationships and communication with our parents is crucial to supporting our pupils. As I have always said, this school belongs to the pupils – this is their school, and we are here to support them to be ready for the next stage in their lives.

This term has been brimming with high-quality enrichment opportunities that have significantly enhanced our pupils' holistic development. We began with Otters' educational visit to the Sikh temple, where they engaged in immersive learning, explored the religion's core values, and experienced authentic traditional cuisine. This visit directly supports their knowledge acquisition within the RSE curriculum, promoting cultural awareness and religious literacy. Badgers received a wonderful visit from the dentist – these targeted interventions are essential for promoting personal development and ensuring we embed health education throughout our curriculum. The fire station visit was instrumental in developing our students' understanding of fire safety. This real-world learning experience enhanced their risk awareness, strengthened their knowledge of keeping safe, and deepened their understanding of community helpers and civic responsibility.

The pupils especially enjoyed our Ireland curriculum day, where they had the opportunity to demonstrate outstanding commitment. It was truly inspiring to witness our pupils engaging in experiential learning through Irish dance, demonstrating creative expression through painting, participating in the imaginative potato dress-up activity, and developing practical life skills through bread making. The day provided exceptional cultural enrichment and every pupil had an absolutely fantastic experience! This learning was further enriched by celebrating Black History month. This was through curriculum-embedded activities including presentations on inspirational figures, a Rich Rhythms African Drumming Workshop, and African Art Prints sessions. I was excited to see these initiatives in action! Through these culturally responsive teaching approaches, we are actively promoting equality, celebrating diversity, and fostering an inclusive learning environment. I am confident our pupils will thoroughly enjoy these transformative learning experiences. We will also celebrated Diwali with different activities for the pupils. This will help them understand different religions and the different cultural activities communities do to celebrate religious events.

Thank you for the donations to the food bank – the staff there were so grateful for everything we gave. I know this will support families who need it the most.

Thank you to all the parents who came to parents' evening and spoke to all our teachers. Working together ensures the pupils get immense support from the school as well as from home.

We end the term with our movie night, which all our pupils enjoy and have so much fun at. I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our PTA for their unwavering support. Their dedication and hard work in organising events and supporting the school community is invaluable.

We have lots of exciting events taking place, all supported by the PTA, and we are grateful for everything they do. Next term, we are all excited about starting to think about our Christmas play and all the festivities which come with it, including the Christmas dinner. But just before that, we know that all the teachers will be focused on learning in the classroom and continuing with this while everything else is going on.

I hope we all have a rested half term and enjoy lots of different activities with your young ones.

**Ms P Rahman**  
**Headteacher**



# Messages Continued...

## SENCO Tip of the Term!

### Emotional regulation—Create a Calm Corner at Home

Children with additional needs can sometimes feel overwhelmed by noise, busy routines, or big emotions. A “calm corner” gives them a safe space to regulate.

- Choose a quiet spot (bedroom corner, under a table, small tent)
- Add soft items: cushions, blankets, cuddly toys
- Include sensory tools: stress ball, fidget toy, weighted lap pad, or calming colouring book
- Get your child to create a name for their calm corner!
- Encourage your child to use it when they feel anxious, tired or frustrated

#### Why it works:

It gives children independence and a practical strategy to manage their emotions, building resilience both at home and at school!

**Mrs Austin &**

**Mrs Whitehead**



## Community Cupboard



Thank you to all the parents/carers that donated items to the

school for the Harvest Celebration. All these lovely items were taken to the Food Cupboard by Ms Quirk and the staff there was extremely grateful!



## FIREFIGHTER VISIT

Birtley House was very lucky to have a real life fire fighter visit! She taught us about fire safety and how to make sure fires don't happen, what the role of a fire fighter is, and she even brought her own fire fighting jacket and helmet for us all to try! We also got to ask her some very important questions such as, do fire fighters prefer tea or coffee.



It was very heavy for some of us but not for Mr Cook!

We had a great morning with her and look forward to seeing her again!



## SPACE WEEK!

We also celebrated Space Week this term!

The theme of space was linked through our learning allowing us to learn two things at one! Badgers class linked their Numeracy lesson by counting the number of planets in our solar system and by naming them all. To help practice our fine motor skills, otters class practiced 'saving' the astronauts from the messy gloop by using tongs to pick them up and putting them in their spaceship. Bats & Badgers then went head to head in a game of space ball!



## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

October is black history month! We have celebrated and raised awareness of the

meaning behind Black History Month and why it is so important to talk about the history of it. We have created beautiful African prints, learned about famous black people in history and then ended our learning with an amazing African Drumming Workshop!



**THE TERM DATES FOR THIS YEAR HAVE BEEN UPDATED  
SO PLEASE ENSURE YOU CHECK THESE.**

## Meet the SALT!

Hi everyone,

I'm Julia and I've been the Speech and Language Therapist at Birtley House for the last year. I have really enjoyed getting to know all of your children over the last year and thought the new academic year would be a good opportunity for you to find out a bit more about me.



**A bit about me:** I have been working as a Speech and Language Therapist for 13 years now and in that time I've worked mainly in Paediatrics (apart from a year in a Specialist College for young adults). I worked for 10 years in Specialist schools and then more recently I have been working across a range of settings including mainstream and specialist schools. I have worked for the NHS, directly for schools and as an Independent Speech and Language Therapist.

**A bit about how I 'do' Speech and Language Therapy:** I am keen that Speech and Language Therapy doesn't need to always look like an adult and a child sat at a table with flashcards. We all know children learn best through play and are more likely to retain information if it is presented in a fun and playful way and that's what we strive to do in our Speech and Language Therapy sessions at Birtley. The evidence also shows us the best way to develop speech, language and communication skills is to embed these skills and strategies in their everyday life experiences, which is why I also work closely with teachers and spend time in classrooms supporting children to access numeracy and literacy sessions.

**What can you expect from me:** I am always available to be contacted either through the senior leadership team or directly, please do feel free to ask questions about your child. I will always have high expectations for your child and treat them with a 'can do' attitude. Part of my role is to help your children to be confident communicators and have a strong self-esteem around their strengths.

Over the next year we are hoping to provide more opportunities for you to meet with us and also sharing some ideas for what you can do at home to support the speech, language and communication of your child. I look forward to getting to know you all more over the next year.

**An idea for this half term holiday** – play Guess Who (or an own brand similar game) with your child. This is a great game for working on turn taking, vocabulary, giving information, listening to information, following instructions, providing context, prediction, negatives within language e.g. doesn't, speech sounds (know what your focus sound is and ensure those words are clear and modelled within the game). You can also adapt the game to suit the needs of your child.

## Meet the OT!

Hello, I am Sharon and I have been the Occupational Therapist (OT) at Birtley House School for 7 years.

I have been a Paediatric Occupational Therapist for 13 years and have worked across a range of establishments. These include NHS, Kent County Council, Starjumpz Childrens Therapies centre, specialist school settings and mainstream schools working alongside the SENCO department.

In years that are more recent, I have extended my passion and enthusiasm for working and supporting paediatrics and adults with acquired head and spinal disabilities by engaging in Medico legal litigation work.



My approach to OT at Birtley House is holistic and equally influenced by your child and myself as I feel child engagement, participation and motivation are key to promoting positive therapeutic relationships, therefore ensuring the best way to learn new skills. Activities of everyday living skills (ADLS) - fine motor and gross motor skills, are encouraged across the school day and duly embedded within the school day. Moreover, children learn through play, and so many of the activities are play based and fun yet educational.

Children also learn from their peers and this is notable within the small therapy groups at Birtley House. The children connect with others who have similar challenges and foster a sense of community with increased hope and aspiration while improving social and communication skills. As part of a dynamic group, your child will also benefit from enhanced self-awareness, confidence and self-empowerment while engaging in shared experiences by listening to other children's narratives.

As we know learning is not school day long, therefore, your child will benefit from transferring the skills practised at school into the home environment to ensure your child has the best possible opportunities to experience learning. Additionally your child will benefit from any of the regular extracurricular activities such as swimming, "going to the park", horse riding, football or rugby, gymnastics, riding a bike/tricycle, Go Ape, Trampolining, art or drama classes, cubs/scouts/guides or any other exciting activity that your child can enjoy. My working days at Birtley House are term time Wednesday and Thursday. Please do contact me should you have any questions or queries that I may be able to provide some help or assistance with.

I look forward to meeting some of you over the next academic year.

# Class Updates

## Otters Class

Otters have had an excellent half term learning all about the local community and people close to them. Otters went on a trip to visit the Gurdwara. We learnt lots and could eat lots of nice food in the Langar. Otters have also been great at choosing time, they have been taking part in the activities around the classroom. There have been lots of clever finger activities, Literacy and Numeracy language. Next half term our focus will be 'Winter Wonderland.' We are really looking forward to learning about celebrations at this time and the change in weather.



## Owls Class

Children in Owls class have been learning about how to be healthy and fit as part of their Science this term. They have also been doing an investigation about different exercises and learned about their importance. They looked at the importance of a balanced diet and how much of each food group we should eat every day.

Next term, Owls class will be going on a trip to Rochester castle as part of their History, where they will be learning about significant people and places.

## Badgers Class

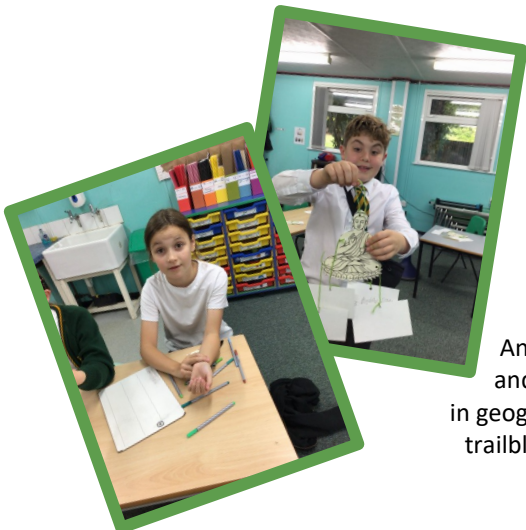
In Badgers, we have enjoyed creating our own paintings using warm and cool colours. We were inspired by the work of Vincent Van Gogh and the children have created some beautiful masterpieces. In Topic, we have learnt about invasions. The children have loved learning how to fight like the soldiers and going into battle. In Music, the children wrote their own song to the tune of 'Sky full of stars', which they then performed to Bats class along with actions. Finally, the highlight of the week was inviting a dentist in to talk about teeth. Otters and Badgers enjoyed the experience and went home with their own little goodie bags too! As we look ahead, the children will be learning about making weaves using different materials.

In Geography, they will learn about different countries and how different places are known for different climates. In Science, the children will be learning about Sound too and will create their own music pieces. There is so much to look forward to in Badgers!



## Bats Class

What an exciting term we have had in Bats! We have investigated the heart by dissecting pig hearts, made blood out of food to represent different components (cheerios for red blood cells, jelly for plasma, marshmallows for white blood cells, and sprinkles for platelets), and we have made blood vessels out of play dough. In RE, we have explored Buddha and his journey to enlightenment, meditating ourselves and creating the story out of paper puppets. We have created our own soundtracks to our favourite genres of games and films on Scratch, and delved into the rich history of Ancient Benin by drawing our own Benin Bronzes and investigating the history of slavery and its impact on Africa and Britain. Next term, we will look at how our world is changing in geography, learning map skills and looking at the impact of climate change. We will look at trailblazing artists and investigate Blues music, enhancing our rich understanding of cultural diversity and our place within the wider world.



# Dates For Your Diary

EVENTS

| AUTUMN 2025                                                                      |                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Term 2 (2025)                                                                    |                                                                                                         |
| Pupils Start                                                                     | Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> October                                                                         |
| Spooky Day                                                                       | Friday 31 <sup>st</sup> October                                                                         |
| Pudsey Day                                                                       | Friday 14 <sup>th</sup> November                                                                        |
| Christingle Service at the Church                                                | Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> December—1.45pm                                                                  |
| Christmas Plays                                                                  | Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> December                                               |
| Christmas Dinner Day                                                             | Wednesday 10 <sup>th</sup> December                                                                     |
| Christmas Jumper, gift shop and Fair Day                                         | Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> December                                                                        |
| Term Finish – <b>Last day for Pupils (finish at 1pm taxis, 1.15pm non-taxis)</b> | Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup> December                                                                       |
| Christmas Holiday                                                                | Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> December – Friday 2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2026 <b>(2 weeks &amp; 3 days)</b> |
| SPRING 2026                                                                      |                                                                                                         |
| Term 3 (2026)                                                                    |                                                                                                         |
| <b>Inset Day (Staff only)</b>                                                    | Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> January                                                                          |
| Pupils Start                                                                     | Tuesday 6 <sup>th</sup> January                                                                         |
| Break up for Half Term                                                           | Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> February                                                                        |
| HALF TERM                                                                        | Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> February - Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> February <b>(1 week)</b>                     |
| Term 4 (2026)                                                                    |                                                                                                         |
| Pupils Start                                                                     | Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> February                                                                        |
| Term Finish – <b>Last day for Pupils (finish at 1pm taxis, 1.15pm non-taxis)</b> | Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> April                                                                          |
| Easter Holiday                                                                   | Friday 3 <sup>rd</sup> April – Friday 17 <sup>th</sup> April <b>(2 weeks &amp; 1 day)</b>               |
| SUMMER 2026                                                                      |                                                                                                         |
| Term 5 (2026)                                                                    |                                                                                                         |
| Pupils Start                                                                     | Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> April                                                                           |
| <b>Bank Holiday</b>                                                              | <b>Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May</b>                                                                        |
| Break up for Half Term                                                           | Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May                                                                             |
| HALF TERM                                                                        | Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> May – Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> June <b>(two weeks)</b>                            |
| Term 6 (2026)                                                                    |                                                                                                         |
| Pupils Start                                                                     | Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> June                                                                             |
| Term Finish – <b>Last day for Pupils (finish at 1pm taxis, 1.15pm non-taxis)</b> | Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> July                                                                            |