

ULLESTHORPE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

BIRCH CLASS FOCUS

THURSDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2026

WWW.ULLESTHORPE.LEICS.SCH.UK



UPCOMING DATES

Half Term Break:

Mon. 19th - Fri 23rd Oct

Individual Photos:

Wednesday 28th October

Secondary Application

Deadline for Year 6:

31st October

Parents Evenings:

Tues 24th November

4-7pm

Thurs 26th November

3:45-6pm

HEAD OF SCHOOL

MRS J. ALLEN

Here at Ullesthorpe CE Primary School, we have continued the Autumn half term positively in a S.T.A.R listening way: our visitors notice all our children's polite manners and the family atmosphere of our school.

We keep a clear focus on our school's Christian vision: 'Learn together, Grow together, Shine forever', and our children continue to flourish and shine their light on others through their varied successes and the kind, helpful and respectful choices that they make.

Read on to find out about the enriching experiences that Birch Class have been involved with this term.

Congratulations to our new School Councillors - read on to find out who they are. Well done to everyone who put themselves forward as candidates and shared their election speeches to their classmates so well!

Please do feel free to come and speak with me at the school gates, or make an appointment through the school office.



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S.T.A.R LISTENING

ENCOURAGING ACTIVE LISTENING

The S.T.A.R listening frame supports our students in encouraging better, active listening behaviours such as increased focus and participation:

S: Sit up smartly in a comfortable listening position; perhaps by clasping hands together or placing them onto your lap.

T: Track (follow with your eyes) the person who is speaking.

A: Attempt to answer questions and join in whenever possible.

R: Respect others by not interrupting and by being supportive of everyone's contributions.

We find that this helps the vast majority of our children to better concentrate when it is time for focused listening. Of course, a small minority of our children will have particular needs and will need to approach active listening in a different way.

Please feel free to ask any of our teaching staff about S.T.A.R listening behaviours and how well our children are responding.



SIT UP



**TRACK THE
SPEAKER**



**ANSWER
QUESTIONS**



**RESPECT
OTHERS**



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BIRCH CLASS

MRS MCMURRAN

An Enriching Half-Term: 'Learning Together'

Birch Class very much enjoyed sharing their thoughts about Harvest with school and family at the Harvest Worship assembly recently. They worked hard to practise their lines and read beautifully, clearly and loudly.

They were keen to share what they had been practising in music lessons - singing in a round. They have also been learning to sing in a 4 part round. They have used the Harvest song plus 'London's Burning' and 'Row, Row, Row your Boat' to learn how to sing in a round. We want to say a big thank you to all our families who donated items for the Lutterworth Food Bank.

HARVEST WORSHIP



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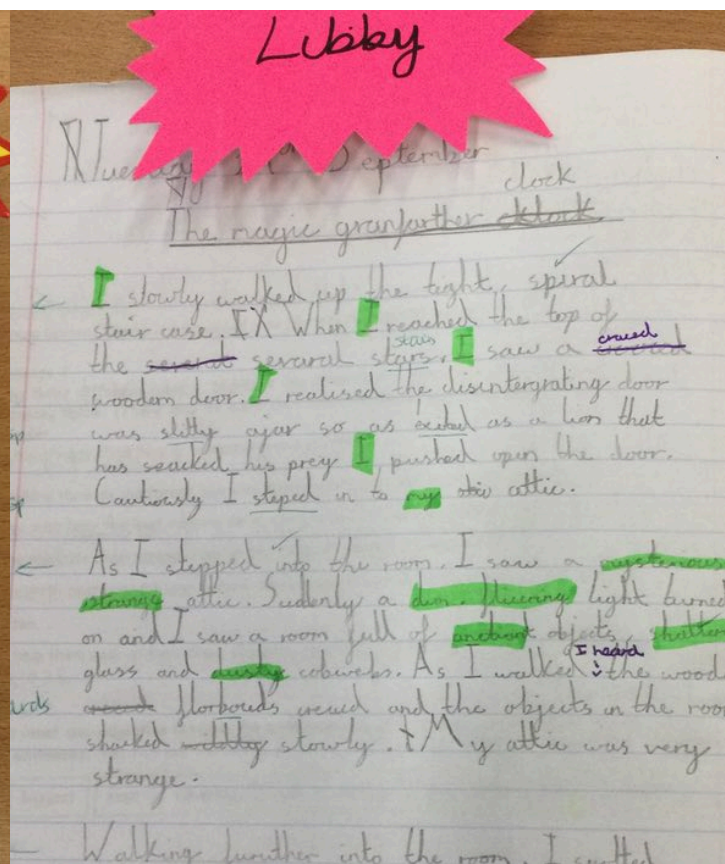
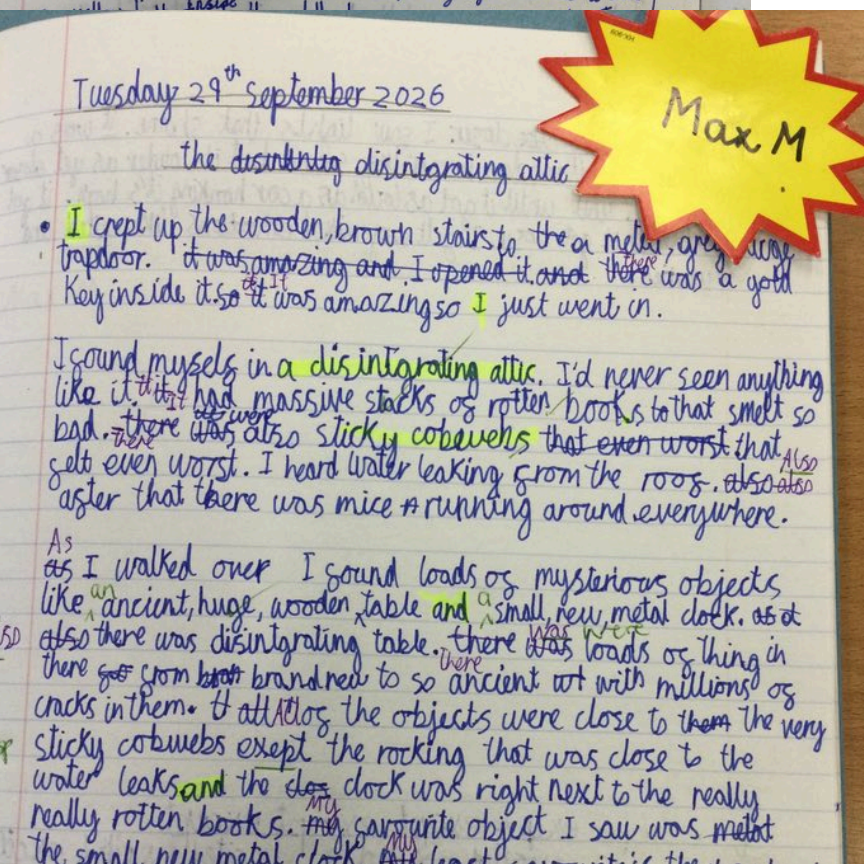
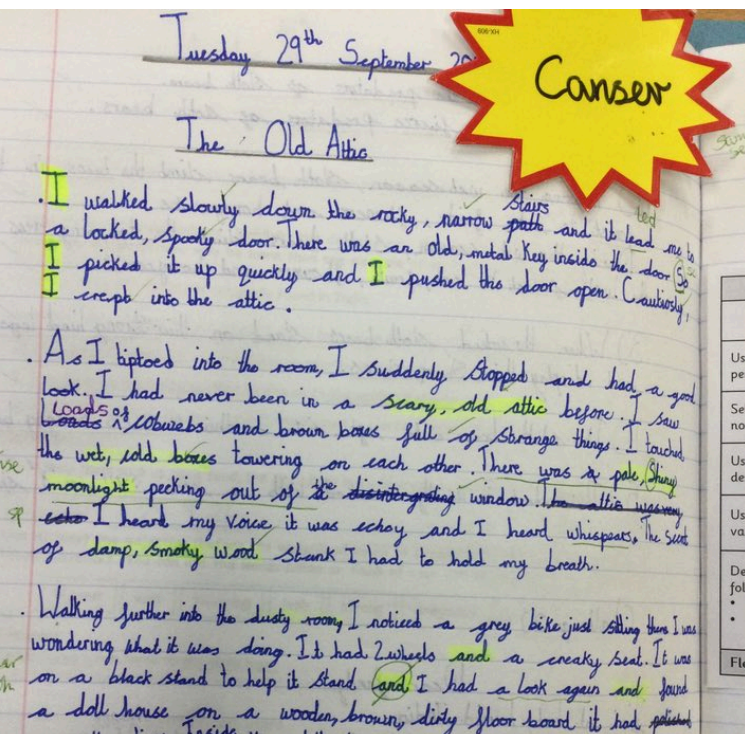
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BIRCH CLASS LEARNING

An Enriching Half-Term: 'Learning Together'

Birch Class Writing:

The children have been working hard on describing a mysterious attic and the objects that they might have found there. Most of the children are already joining their handwriting and, as you can see from the examples, are working hard on accuracy, presentation and neat handwriting.



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BIRCH CLASS LEARNING

Birch Class Art:

With Mrs Purdy, Children have been looking at the artistic style of Vincent Van Gogh and early stone age art. They then used the poems 'The Hippocrump' and 'The Quangle Wangle's Hat' to inspire them to create their own picture of a mysterious beast - using the paint and drawing techniques they had been practising in previous lessons.



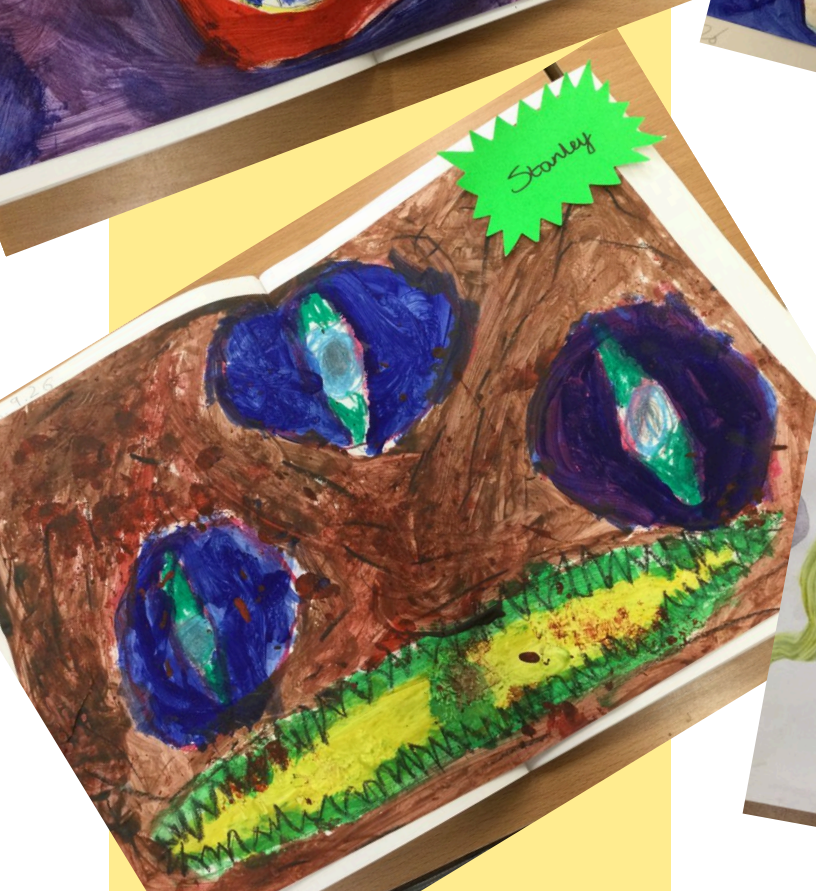
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BIRCH LEARNING PHOTOS



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SCHOOL COUNCIL 26-27



**Congratulations to our new
School Council members:**

**Oliver L, Mimi, Max H, Ivy B, Theodore and
Arabelle!**

**Your classmates have voted for you to be their school
council representatives and we are very much looking
forward to working with you from next half term!**

**Mrs Allen, Mrs Leese, Mrs McMurran, Miss Larke, Mr
Gray and Mrs Hartley**



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI COMPANIONS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

AI companions are programmed to be endlessly agreeable, attentive, and available 24/7. Unlike human friendships, an AI companion never disagrees, sets personal boundaries, or gets tired. Young people (especially those experiencing loneliness, social anxiety, or low self-esteem) can quickly develop an unhealthy emotional attachment, viewing synthetic software as their 'best friend' or a surrogate romantic partner.

DANGEROUS MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE

AI chatbots possess no genuine empathy, professional clinical knowledge, or moral reasoning. While developers state these tools are not therapists, vulnerable teenagers often turn to them in crisis. Chatbots have previously hallucinated unsafe medical guidance, validated depressive spirals, and failed to safely escalate disclosures of self-harm or suicidal ideation to real-world protective services.

DATA HARVESTING & OVERSHARING

Because conversational bots simulate warmth and understanding, children often lower their guard and treat the chatbot as a trusted friend. They may disclose sensitive personal information, including full names, school details, private family problems, or secrets, unaware that their conversations are being logged, may be analysed by third parties (including advertisers), or used to train future AI models.

DISTORTED SOCIAL SKILLS

Navigating real-world friendships can be messy, involving dealing with conflict, compromise, boredom, and awkwardness. If a teenager spends hours interacting with an AI that is tailored specifically to validate and flatter them, they may become impatient with real-world relationships. Over time, this can lead to social withdrawal, heightened anxiety in peer groups, and isolation: a vicious circle of growing online dependency coupled with a heightened sense that relationships in the 'real world' are too challenging to maintain.

INAPPROPRIATE OR EXPLICIT CONTENT

While most mainstream platforms feature safety filters and guardrails, young people frequently discover 'jailbreak' prompts to bypass them. Some companion platforms subtly nudge users towards mature themes, romantic roleplay, or sexually suggestive conversations. In worse cases, third-party apps with weak safety checks have been found to generate sexually explicit text or intimate images.

"FREEMIUM" UPSELLS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many companion platforms operate on a freemium model. While basic chat is free, features like voice calls, uncensored responses, custom avatars, or 'deeper bonding' tiers are locked behind expensive monthly recurring subscriptions or in-app token purchases. This can lead to significant hidden costs and pressure on young people to spend money to maintain the 'friendship'.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TALK OPENLY ABOUT FAKE RELATIONSHIPS

Demystify how these tools work. Explain to young people that an AI companion has no feelings, memories, or consciousness; it is simply calculating the next most mathematically probable word based on its training data. It is helpful to explain to them the mechanics of large language models so that they understand how they are trained and how they are designed to always flatter and be helpful.

ENCOURAGE REAL-WORLD CONNECTION

Ensure technology habits do not replace face-to-face peer socialisation, sports, hobbies, and family time. Create healthy boundaries at home (such as keeping phones and tablets out of bedrooms overnight) to prevent late-night, unmonitored attachment loops with conversational chatbots when young people are at their most vulnerable.

AUDIT PRIVACY SETTINGS & AGE LIMITS

Check which companion apps are installed on your child's phone or tablet. Many dedicated companion apps carry an App Store rating of 17+, while platforms like Character.ai set a minimum age of 13+ (or 16+ in the UK/EU). Review the privacy settings together: turn off data-sharing toggles, disable model training where possible, and ensure location permissions are blocked.

REINFORCE WHERE TO GET REAL HELP

Make sure young people know that a machine can never replace professional pastoral or mental health care. Remind them of the trusted adults they can turn to at school – such as their Form Tutor, Head of Year, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – as well as dedicated youth support services like Childline (0800 1111) or Shout (text 85258).

Meet Our Expert

Darren Coxon is the Founder and Executive Director of Kompass Education, a consultancy specialising in supporting educators, students and parents in making wise choices with AI. His book *Ethical AI and Education*, co-authored with Clara Hawking, will be released later in 2026 by Taylor and Francis.



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