Outdoor Education at St Katherine's School

Sugar Loaf 2026

"We're going up that?"



The first term of secondary school is over and it's been a rollercoaster for Year 7. So many new lessons, new teachers and new friends! Finding your way to your classes, keeping on top of homework, remembering to pack your bag with your books! You've probably done a lot of growing up in the last few weeks.

On top of that, the fresh faced Year 7s have completed an extraordinary feat in scaling Pen Yr Fal (Sugar Loaf Mountain 496m). This "hill" is 4m short of being classed as a mountain, but we certainly see it as every bit a mountain in challenge.



From the first steep ascent out of the car park and the first nerve-wracking view across the moorland of our target, to the challenging rock steps at the very top - Pen Yr Fal packs everything that Bannau Brychiniog has to offer.

The groups all worked really well together to take on the climb, with lots of sharing of sweets, jokes and encouragement. Many students showed an enormous amount of courage, overcoming fears and worries about heights and wind at the top.





One of the final features of the summit is a series of scrambles over some intimidating exposed rock features. Students learn to assess the risk and make sensible choices. These are such essential skills for later mountain climbing expeditions and many students stepped a long way off what they would normally have been comfortable with doing. These exciting experiences in mountainous areas are an incredible way to go further than you thought you ever would do! It was great to see some many enthusiasts for the challenges, but also so many pluck up the courage and go for it!

The students enjoyed beautiful views - with the clouds and mist staying clear for all of the summits.



We had lots of opportunities to enjoy the ancient woodlands, learning about the trees, the plants and the many mushrooms that could be found along the way.

These trips are about being out of your comfort zone, and many students dug really deep to reach the top. The trip is also about getting to know your new fellow tutees and making some very strong friendships.

Thank you all for your effort and hard work. You all represented yourselves and the school very well! Mr Bradshaw enjoyed reaching the top with the groups he walked with and was very proud of everyone.

Thank you to the tutors and staff who joined us and also to Mr Parsons and Mr Bradshaw for leading groups, Ms Grocock for helping with medicines for the trip and especially Ms Whiting for running the show behind the scenes!

Some more photos from across the trips:



On the way up! The autumnal colours of the bracken really set the scene.



The honour of carrying the flag to the top was taken very seriously by some of the groups!



You can do anything with a helping hand!



Students found their way through some rock features. Encouraged by friends and showing some real grit! Already looking forward to caving trips in Year 8!



Enjoying the views from the top!

Feeling the strain in the legs but a great sense of achievement! Looking back at what you've done and feeling proud of yourself is a wonderful feeling..even if you never want to go near Sugar Loaf again!



And of course… the minibuses at the end! A beautiful and welcome sight for all!