October 2026
Issue: 2

Outdoor Education at St Katherine's School

BLASTING AWAY THE COBWEBS



As with the rest of the school, term 1 always starts at a frenetic pace. It's no different for St Katherine's Outdoor Education. We were keen to take advantage of the milder weather in September and October and getting the Year 7s up Pen Yr Fal (Sugar Loaf).

The new cohorts of Bronze, Silver and Gold Duke of Edinburgh all started their respective journeys, and we were able to celebrate the completion of over fifty awards from last Year.

Starting what will hopefully be a regular part of the calendar, we put forward a strong team in a local schools bouldering competition. And we dusted off the surfboards again, heading down to Westward Ho! For a splash in the sea.

October 2026
Issue: 2

St. Katherine's School

Sugar Loaf 2026

“We’re going up that?”

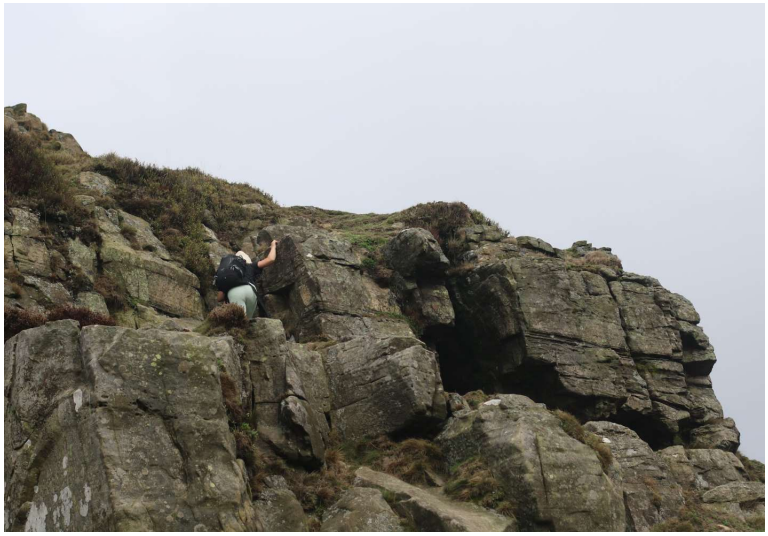


The first term of secondary school is nearly over and it’s been a rollercoaster for Year 7. So many new lessons, new teachers and new friends! Finding your way to your classes, keeping on top of homework, remembering to pack your bag with your books! You’ve probably done a lot of growing up in the last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

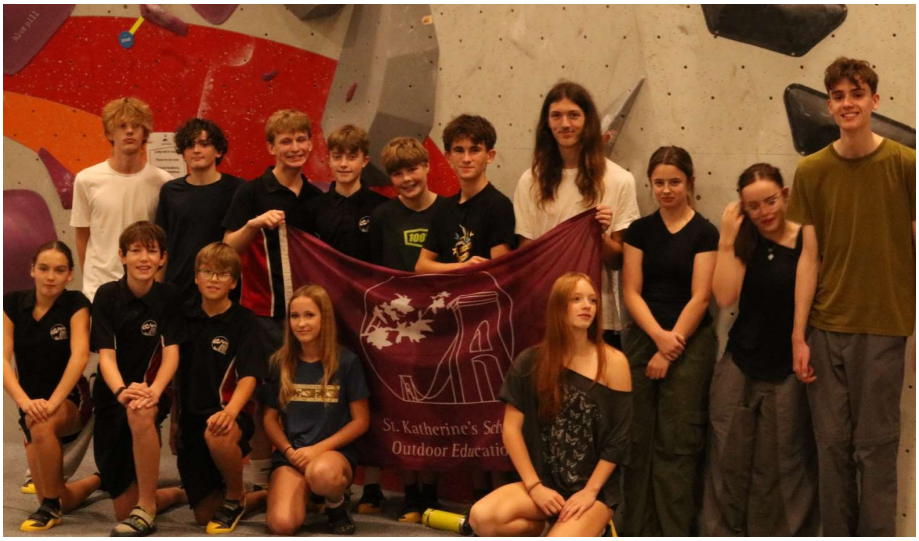




October 2026
Issue: 2

SWSBL 2026/27

The South West Schools Bouldering League started this month and students from our school represented in force! Although there have been some entrants in previous years, this was the first year we have taken a team to the competition.



Held at The Mothership Climbing Wall in Bristol, hundreds of students test their nerve and strength on a series of challenges. which involved a series of artificial holds on the climbing wall. Although the routes may only be a couple of metres off the ground, the angle of the wall, size of the hold and distance between the holds make for an incredibly tough and varied challenge.

Students are pitted against 25 bouldering problems and have one attempt at each climb. By getting off the ground they gain one point, reaching certain holds can earn you up to two, and a final point is won by finishing in control at the top of the climb. With no real way to know how hard the climb is until you are on it, it takes a lot of concentration to get maximum points! The top score (100 points) is only achievable with no mistakes on any climbs!



The standard was incredibly high, with teams from BGS, Trinity, Queens and BCCS fielding very strong sides.

Imogen Slee and **Marla Green** (Yr 11) put up a huge work rate to attempt a huge number of the climbs. Imogen in particular showed some excellent strength and balance on some tricky starts.

Louie Olivier (Yr 11) captivated the referees and coaches at the centre completing a very tricky overhanging problem. Relying on good strength and technical skill to balance through the tricky climb. The Year 9s were representing us well too, with some excellent efforts from **Oskar Thomson**.

Top 5 for St Katherine's School.	
Imogen Slee (Y11)	80
Marla Green (Y11)	78
Louie Olivier (Y11)	78
Oskar Thomson (Y9)	77
Suzi Berryman-Morris (Y12)	75

Our students did very well, finishing some incredible climbs with confidence. There appears to be a lot of strategy involved in working these climbs out, so expect their strong scores to get even stronger.

There are three more rounds to come, with the strongest three scores being taken from across the year. Wish the team luck when you see them!

St. Katherine's School











Clockwise from the right: 1. Seb (Yr 12) giving out some tips (or beta) to Henry (Yr 10) on a tricky balancy climb. 2. Bess (Yr 10) warming up on a big overhang. 3. "Only hipsters climb inside" 4. Harry (Yr 10) floating up to the top! 5. Arlo (Yr 11) hanging around on a strong move.

October 2026
Issue: 2

Duke of Edinburgh Award



Respect is a key thing to learn in all parts of life and the mountains are no exception. With all the excitement that fills a final year, time is precious. Trying to balance all the activities with completing your Gold DofE is a mammoth task, so the Year 13s practice expedition to Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) was squeezed into a busy term. No one, however, can organise the weather. After weeks of autumnal bliss, two massive storms, the first named storms of the season, hit the UK with force.

Despite having a glorious day, summiting Pen-Y-Fan and basking in the golden warm hues of landscape, powerful winds and torrential rains made spending time on the mountains a poor choice and unfortunately the second half of the expedition had to be called off.

This was disappointing but the right decision. Strong winds, poor visibility and rain generate a huge number of potential hazards. It's amazing to experience the full force of nature, but the speed at which things go from bad to worse in the mountains is a lot faster in terrible weather and a risk not worth taking.



The Gold participants were fantastically cheerful and good spirited despite the incredible amount of wind and rain thrown at them. All were returned safe and dry and learned a valuable lesson - sometimes the mountains will say "not today"!

St. Katherine's School



Taking in the views from the top of Corn Du, the sister peak to Pen-Y-Fan.



The full majesty of the central Beacons rolling out to the west. The specks on the shoulder of Corn Du are our students!

October 2026
Issue: 2

Surf Trip



October is a fantastic month for surfing in the UK. The last of the summer warmth holds out in the water and the winter swell is starting to build. This combination means you can get some fantastic, clean and warm waves right the way up until November. It's often said that Westward Ho! can't hold much of the big winter storm swells, but when it's all just right, it's an absolute autumnal dream.



We took two groups down to catch some waves in half-term. Westward Ho! is a fantastic beach to learn to surf on, with predictable and safe waves rolling in on a shallow beach. Most students were total beginners but up for a challenge, so once they had their quick intro lesson, they got stuck in.

Wednesday saw powerful onshore winds, and the back end of the swell from the storms at the start of half term. A lot of the cleaner waves got thrown over but they definitely packed a punch and made very catchable white water.

Friday had a better forecast and a stiff offshore and long period made some tantalising clean line appear outback. The hard part was getting there! Regardless, the reforming waves got scooped out well by the wind and on the foamies this meant lots of waves for everyone!
Although the conditions were really hard, the St Katherine's students had a great time. What better way to learn resilience than trying to learn a totally new skill whilst getting smashed by powerful, chilly waves.



October 2026
Issue: 2

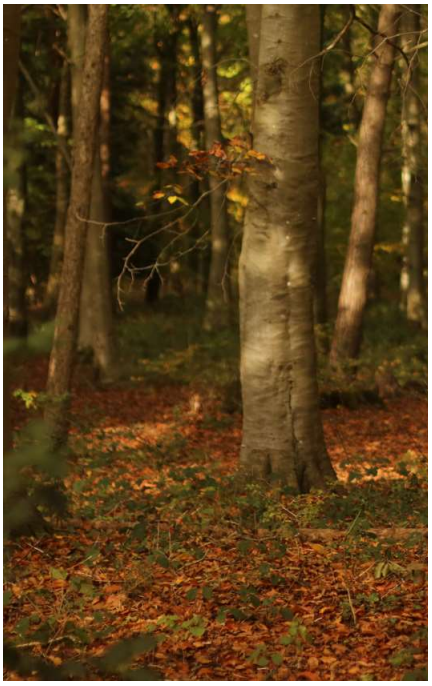


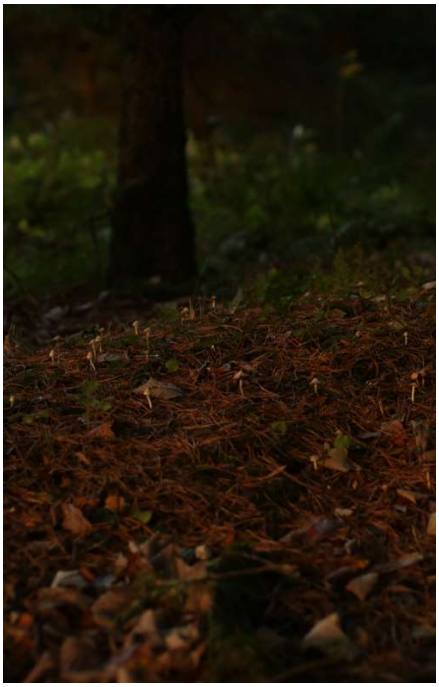
After a tough session in the water, the reward of chips, ice cream and beautiful views made the hard work worth it. Well done to all those who took part. Surfing seemed very popular so more trips will be organised for the other side of winter.

Thank you to Ms Farrell and Ms Whiting for their amazing help organising the trip!

Outdoors at St Katherine's School







Autumn is a feast of colour. The golden low light of the lengthening evenings saturates the world with rich hues and vibrant leaves.

In the forest area at St Katherine's students have been paying attention to the changing colours by collecting the colours of the forest.

October 2026
Issue: 2

Take a moment to turn an Autumn walk into a journey through nature's palette. Find some colourful objects around the house, choose one or two and see if you can match the colours of the object to something found on your walk.



Here are some examples using coloured clay materials, but you can use anything you find around the house. There's such a rich variety of tones to enjoy. Another idea could be to see if you can make a beautiful transition of colours, say from greens to yellows.

Even just a short walk around a local park could help you see the beautiful visual reminder of the changing of the seasons.

Photography Competition Round 1

The competition theme for the last few weeks was "Wide Spaces". We had some amazing entries, with lots of great interpretations of the theme.

These entries stood out. The first from Romario Bannister in 7S1 - beautiful sunrise shot from the summit of Pen-Y-Fan. The second was from Oscar Fernihough also in 7S1 - I liked the way the door frames the amazing wide space beyond! Well done to both!





The next competition will have the theme of "Change" - please see below for details on how to get involved.

October 2026
Issue: 2

Remember

Photography Competition	Share your amazing adventures - best photo will be featured in the next issue and wins a prize. Please send your photographs to hodgsont@skdrive.org and join the google classroom using the code: **dytn4qia**
DofE	**eDofE and sections to be added as soon as possible**
Bouldering League	30th November
Indoor Climbing	Dates to be confirmed for some more indoor climbing. If you climb indoors or outdoors and want to meet some other climbers at the school - email hodgsont@skdrive.org and join the google classroom using the code: **q5gsiz4i**



St Katherine's Website



Term dates



Termly newsletters



DofE Frequently Asked Questions